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THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTIANITY

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The BEGINNING of CHRISTIANITY

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PREFACE

THIS volume has been prepared to guide the serious student in a study of the beginning of Christianity. It is written out of the firm conviction that this approach provides the most advantageous introduction to the New Testament. These twenty-seven books are not a series of miscellaneous literary documents to be studied one by one. They derive their importance from the fact that they contain the record of the rise of the Christian faith. They are studied either because we believe that that faith is significant, or because we want to discover why others hold it to be important.

The traditional "Introduction" to the New Testament has consisted in an analysis of the literary problems (date, authorship, structure, sources, etc.) of the different books. These are important questions, and even at the beginning of one's study of the Bible, reference books are needed to which one may turn for information on these points. But the exhaustive treatment of these subjects belongs to advanced study, not to an introduction which should cultivate the interest of the student. I believe that he should begin with a clear story of the development of Christian faith based upon sound historical research.

The object of this book is to tell that story and thus guide in the study of the New Testament itself. Hence biblical passages are not fully reproduced. The aim has been to provide a continuous, readable narrative, yet care has been taken that this book should not possibly be a substitute for the reading of the New Testament itself. Rather it endeavors to help the student understand the text of the Bible.

The only biblical passages cited are incidental allusions. The main sections of the Bible which are discussed are listed at the close of each chapter as "Bible readings." It is hoped that in this way the reader may be stimulated to study the text of the New Testament along with each chapter. In the case of gospel parallels, only what appears to be the most original version is listed, so that the references will not be extended more than is absolutely necessary.

Only in a few cases where the balance of probability seems to be very close are competing opinions given. I have acted on the belief that the average student is unnecessarily confused by a long array of competing hypotheses. Positions are not identified by the names of individual scholars holding them. While a selected bibliography is offered, specific references are not given to secondary sources. Individual readers would not have access to most of the books; in the case of college or seminary teachers, I believe that they would prefer to select their own additional references and formulate their own questions for discussion.

In a survey of this kind, the most important sections do not receive as full a treatment as they deserve. These call for more advanced and intensive study. Primarily does this apply to the synoptic gospels, which deserve the closest possible textual study, to the theology of Paul, and to the interpretation of Christianity in the Fourth Gospel. Nothing brings out more clearly to what extent the Fourth Gospel stands apart than an attempt to work its material into a story of the beginnings of Christianity.

The author is responsible for the quotations from the New Testament. No attempt has been made to provide a new translation. The rendering follows the principles of the standard revised version which is soon to be published, but the text is usually not identical with that.

I desire to express my gratitude to many friends and fellow teachers of the Bible who have read parts of the manuscript or made suggestions for the plan and organization of the book. It is sent forth with the hope that it may repay in part all those who have contributed through the years to our truer understanding of the New Testament.

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THE STUDY OF CHRISTIAN BEGINNINGS

1. Christianity as Historical Religion

Christianity is a historical religion. That is true in a sense which cannot be said of any of the other great faiths of mankind except Judaism. Of course every known religion has appeared in history, and has passed through a process of historical change and development. This is true of Christianity, for it has not remained unaltered throughout the nineteen centuries of its existence. But in no other religion does a series of historical events occupy so prominent a place. The phrase in the Apostles' Creed, "suffered under Pontius Pilate," symbolizes how definitely Christianity is rooted and grounded in history.

We may clarify this point through a brief comparison with Buddhism. A particular historical moment was important in the discovery of the central idea of Buddhism. As Gautama was meditating under the Bo tree, he came to realize that only through rejection of all desire can man find release from the wheel of existence. But the idea was quite independent of the circumstances under which it came to the founder of this religious movement. In Buddhism it is not the historical event but the idea which is central. In contrast, Christianity can never be reduced to one abstract idea or series of ideas. It holds to the belief that there has been a series of revealing acts of God in history. While these acts reveal the eternal nature of God, the religion cannot be reduced to any group of speculative ideas. Christianity cannot be divorced from the historical milieu in which it appeared, for it gives central significance to a belief about those events in history.

A historical religion may be contrasted with *philosophical religion.* No one would deny that Christian theologians have utilized philosophy in the past, and must use philosophy in the future. We cannot think systematically about life's values without employing this discipline. But the relationship of philosophy to religion may be conceived in very different ways. Philosophical religion will begin with rational arguments for the existence of God: proofs from science for the order and reliability of the universe, the intelligibility of the world as evidence that it is the product of a mind, and the presence of values, particularly moral values, as evidence for a cosmic sustainer of values. All of this is important; yet it has little relation to the origins of Christianity and it hardly touches the core of Christian faith, a holy God of redemptive love. Belief in him did not arise through systematic attempts by philosophers to explain the universe, but through the living experience of prophetic men. The philosopher's task here is to evaluate critically the experiences of religion. These did not arise from the craving of the intellect for unity, but from the demand of the heart for deliverance.

Other books deal with the philosophical approach to the religious problem; other books also deal with the philosophical criticism of the data of Christian religious experience. These are appropriate objects of study, but they do not fall within the purpose of this volume. It seeks to present the nature of Christianity through a study of its origins. A crucial sequence of events will portray the essential nature of Christian faith. They cannot be reduced to a single abstract idea. Only a historical approach can set forth the real genius of Christianity.

The student of the beginning of Christianity comes upon two things side by side, *event* and *interpretation.* The objective historian sometimes seeks to eliminate the second in his passion to see things as they actually were. As a matter of fact, that is always impossible. The best that a scientific historian can do is to substitute his interpretation for that of the men and women who had the experiences. "Uninterpreted" history is the illusion of the man who forgets the inevitable relativity of every point of view.

There is always a difference between history "seen from the inside" and history "seen from the outside." There is a difference between history which we observe as a spectator and "our history." "Our history" always includes what the events mean to us. The same events may not mean the same things to another who is an outsider. His interpretation may give a quite different view of the event, the view of one who did not share the same experience. My own interpretation contains bias, but it does include what the experience meant to the man who had it. It is the event interpreted "from the inside." There is no such thing as a bare event; there is only an event which is interpreted through the eyes of someone. The desire for historic objectivity can never eliminate that fact. No man can report any event except through his presuppositions and previous experience. An "objective" view of religious experience is often simply a nonreligious view. It is as little calculated to give us "the truth" as an interpretation of music by one who has never cultivated musical sensitivity.

The New Testament is a collection of ancient records which frankly describe the origins of Christianity from the inside. They tell of historical events, but these events are interpreted through the eye of faith. As religious documents they contain interpretations which are part and parcel of the events if they are to be understood as the participants understood them. But as historical documents they must be approached through the medium of the historical disciplines which students have developed for the more accurate interpretation of ancient records. As documents which speak to us from the first century, they must be studied objectively if we are to know what the author tried to say to his readers.

2. Historical Method in Bible Study

Scientific historical study begins logically with *textual criticism* or, as it is sometimes called, lower criticism. No autograph of any New Testament book has been preserved. Before the invention of printing, copies of a book had to be made by hand whenever a work was to be published. Throughout hundreds of years, many accidental changes take place in a text, and sometimes intentional editing occurs. It is estimated that in the approximately four thousand manuscript witnesses to the New Testament possibly two hundred thousand variations are to be found. The editing of a text as near the original as possible is a prerequisite for the understanding of any document. Obviously this is a discipline which can be followed only by those who read the original languages in which these documents were written. But every student of a translation should realize that the first step in understanding an author is to know the text which he wrote. The major objection to the King James version of the Bible is not that it is written in archaic English; it is a translation of a Greek text which cannot be defended on scholarly grounds. All students should use the American Standard version or some modern version based on a genuinely critical text.

There are many relatively simple accounts describing the most important New Testament manuscripts, the families into which they are classified, and the principles by which the true reading is determined. Space cannot be taken here for this story, nor will textual variants be discussed in this book except in a few cases where crucial passages are involved. The recent discovery of new manuscript material has made this a rapidly growing and important field of study, but it is obviously for the advanced student, not the beginner. Yet every Bible reader should appreciate the fact that the first step in understanding the book consists in securing as nearly the correct text as possible.

The second step in the scientific study of a historical document is the production of an *accurate translation.* Here philology and grammar are our tools. Words and phrases were used by the author to convey a definite meaning. This can be reached only by the historical student of language, in this case Greek. After a careful study of each word, the scholar must render the whole into idiomatic English for our use. An inaccurate translation may lead to an utterly false interpretation of the religious event or idea. At this point in our study the linguist takes precedence over the theologian. He is the scientist in this field, and he can be answered only by more accurate linguistic work.

The next step in historical method is the so-called *higher criticism.* This is a very unfortunate term which was formerly used in contrast to lower or textual criticism. Higher criticism is the investigation of the authorship, date, place, circumstances, and purpose of a document. Each book is studied separately in order to answer these questions. Any idea of belittling the documents is farthest from the mind of the scholar. He approaches them in a scientific spirit to investigate the facts about these points. The evidence is always of two kinds, internal and external. There is the evidence supplied by the document itself concerning its author, time of composition, and place. There is also the evidence afforded by outside data, such as later references to the book or indications of its influence.

No matter how scientific a literary investigation may be, there is not always complete agreement among scholars. This is especially true in New Testament study, where the defense or rejection of traditional opinions concerning authorship is connected with deep emotional prejudices. But no one can deny the absolute necessity for this "higher criticism" if the books are to be understood accurately. It is just as much higher criticism to affirm that John, the son of Zebedee, wrote the Fourth Gospel as it is to deny that point of view.

This discipline is usually described as the field of "Introduction." Students should often refer to these scientific introductions to the New Testament literature. But this book is not designed to follow that approach. Enough of the conclusions of New Testament introduction will be introduced to make it possible for the reader to study these books intelligently. Yet our purpose is not to deal with the twenty-seven books as separate literary documents but to use them for the understanding of the historical process of the beginning of Christianity.

The fourth scientific prerequisite for the understanding of any book is a knowledge of the *history* of the period, of the *geography* of the part of the world involved, and the *cultural and religious heritage* of the time. In the case of the New Testament, since most of the books were written by men who were former Jews, we must know as much of their heritage as possible. Since most, if not all, of their books were written for Gentiles living in the Graeco-Roman world, we should know as much about their background as possible. In one volume of the size of this book, it is obviously impossible to do more than sketch the main outlines in these fields. The student should extend this reading as widely as time and interest permit. No matter how timeless the books of the Bible may be in their essential message, each author wrote with the needs of a definite group of people in the first century in mind. Only as we make the sincere endeavor to put ourselves in their place can we discover what the author was trying to say.

There has been much study of the Bible which made no such attempt to discover the meaning of the original author. On the assumption that these books were intended for our spiritual guidance, they have been approached with the objective of discovering a divine message to the reader of today. All kinds of arbitrary devices have been conceived to discover applications to contemporary experience. The number of the Beast in Revelation, 666, has been identified with the enemy of the moment; or subtle references to current events are found in verses where no one had previously suspected such a meaning. This type of Bible study may appear very exciting to the uninitiated who have no knowledge of the long history of that kind of misuse of the Bible. It seems very thrilling to be told how biblical writers anticipated the morning headlines until we stop to realize that, if it were true, their words would have been meaningless to the original readers and to every previous generation.

One reason why it has been so difficult to shake off this modernizing misuse of the Bible is that the first Christians themselves inherited the allegorical method of interpretation of scripture in their own reading of the Old Testament. Paul insisted, for instance, that when God commanded, "You shall not muzzle the ox when he treads out the corn" (I Cor. 9:9), it was not because he was concerned with oxen. This meant that preachers of the gospel had a right to be supported in their work. In other words, when the literal meaning of a passage did not give a satisfactory significance, another "spiritual" meaning was to be found behind it through the interpreter's ingenuity.

No one should deny that resort to allegory has often been motivated by a spirit of reverence. Men felt that the sacred text should offer a meaning which was more significant to them than any literal reading could afford. But in fact, allegorical interpretation is the substitution of arbitrary fancy for the scientific investigation of fact. It makes of the Bible a wax nose which may be twisted at the whim of the interpreter. It does not "read out" the meaning of a passage, but "reads into" it what we desire to find. There are some passages which were originally composed as allegories. The author intended his words to be taken as metaphors. It is part of the scientific study of any document to discover when the author had an allegorical intention. In that case, to take the words literally is to misinterpret the author. But the contrast should be plain between using objective literary disciplines to discover just what an author was endeavoring to say, and permitting subjective fancy to determine what we get from reading a book.

3. The Meaning of Revelation

But this scientific, historical study which we have been describing may be carried on simply "from the outside." In fact, some scholars have felt that if they should enter into the presuppositions of the biblical writers they would forfeit their claim to be historians. On the other hand, Christian believers who approached the New Testament records "from the inside" have often been hesitant in accepting their dependence on these historical disciplines. They have believed that the Bible contained the revelation of God, and it was sacrilegious to treat these books in the same way that other ancient records are studied. The claim to a divine revelation is one that cannot be subjected to proof, for there is obviously nothing else by which it can be tested. But it is important to have a clear understanding of what is meant by revelation. Very different ideas have been described under that one word.

Revelation has sometimes been understood to consist in *a holy book*. In Mormonism, Joseph Smith is said to have discovered the actual golden plates of the book of Mormon which contained the supernatural revelation. In Mohammedanism, the Koran is believed to contain nothing less than the dictated words of God. The sacred book is preserved in heaven, and its contents were supernaturally communicated to the Prophet through an angel or spirit. Even on Christian soil it has sometimes been held that the books of the Bible were practically dictated to the human writers through the Holy Spirit. The idea goes back to the Jewish conception of the law as created by God before the world and communicated to Moses on Mount Sinai.

I do not think that this is the distinctively Christian position. If God once wrote his revelation in an inerrant book, he certainly failed to provide any means by which this could be passed on without contamination through human fallibility. A brief consideration of the problems faced under historical method will make that clear. The truer Christian position is that the Bible contains the record of the revelation. The living God is not confined to a book. The Christian faith holds that revealing acts of the living God have been recorded by those who participated in these experiences. These books have been subject to all of the vicissitudes of other human writings. The revelation of God is in life, not a book. If some books are for us a word of God, it is because they contain the record of that revelation.

According to a second prevalent theory, revelation consists in *the supernatural communication of ideas.* These are truths which are not verifiable within sense experience or they are predictions of the future which lie beyond human knowledge. This revealed knowledge stands in contrast to what is subject to human discovery. Now there is an element of mystery which surrounds inspiration in every field. The poet, the composer, or the artist can never tell how the vision comes. But these are experiences found among all peoples and are not peculiar to Christian revelation. High thoughts have come to many and in a variety of ways. Biblical writers sometimes describe visions and auditions; sometimes they foretell the future panorama of world events. But the essential difference in the Christian idea of revelation is not found here. Hindu seers have had their visions and as many predictions were made by the Delphic oracle as by Hebrew prophets. The claim that the New Testament contains revelation must not be confused with alleged supernatural lore nor with predictions of the future course of history.

Revelation is *the self-communication of God.* It takes place in human experience and in events which occur in history. It is more than the complement to human discovery. Discovery uncovers the impersonal; but there is no way by which anyone can discover a person by his own unaided efforts. Persons are known only through their own self-disclosure. Hence, revelation has no meaning where there is a completely impersonal conception of God. Through his devout and worshipful attitude, man may discover new aspects of the Infinite Mystery. That process may take place on purely human initiative. The Christian belief in revelation is based on a conviction of the divine initiative. It is God who has spoken, and it is God who has acted. We come into knowledge of him because he has been seeking to reveal himself to men.

But revelation is always revelation that is *humanly received.* Even though it is God who speaks, that word is received through the human ear and understanding. It must be interpreted by reason and faith. Though it is God who acts, it is man's vision which traces the course of that activity. If from one point of view revelation is the self-communication of God, from another point of view it is the understanding of the meaning of an event. Revelation is experienced and is subjected to interpretation. What some men see as ordinary events or unusual experiences have been to prophets and seers revelations of God.

Against this background we are in a better position to understand the claim that the New Testament contains a revelation. It does not contain a collection of twenty-seven little books dictated by a supernatural power. It does not contain a series of truths not open to sense experience, nor an infallible timetable of future history. The New Testament is the record of events in which those people whom we know as Christians have found a unique revelation of God. After God had spoken through a law and through his prophets, he had spoken through a Son. He had brought deliverance to men. In gospel and in letter and in "revelation" this story is told. The New Testament writers do not come forward with claims about their books. They tell the story of events which meant to them nothing less than the ultimate revelation of God.

Revelation, then, involves *the understanding of events as containing the self-communication of God.* But no events ever occur in history in complete isolation. No matter how new a phenomenon may be, it is always related to the old. No matter how far forward a leap may be, it is always taken from some fixed point in the past. Complete discontinuity can never be found. It is especially important to stress this fact, for some have endeavored to interpret the Jewish-Christian revelation as if a pipe line flowed from Moses to Paul and John, through which the divine truth passed uncontaminated by external influences. On the other hand, some scholars have appeared to assume that any claim to revelation would be ruled out if it should be shown that Israel was in constant interrelation with the other peoples of the Near East, and Christianity arose under syncretistic conditions. The question of divine revelation is not at stake in a discussion whether Jewish or Hellenistic influences are to be found in a given development in early Christianity. The claim of revelation is an interpretation of the whole result; there can be no pretension of complete isolation from external historical influences.

4. The Purpose of This Volume

The objective historian finds the treatment of the New Testament difficult because these books so obviously contain interpreted history. It is not the historian's task to be a missionary for a religious faith. He feels that he should treat the beginnings of Christianity as impartially as the beginnings of Buddhism. Academic study must take much the same attitude. It can hardly be made the purpose of a curricular course in Bible to make converts to Christian faith. Rather, Christianity is an important part of the cultural heritage of the modern world which every intelligent citizen should understand. A knowledge of what Christian faith is, does belong properly to academic study. But the winning of adherents to the Christian faith is the responsibility of the bodies of believers themselves. But here is the problem: a religious faith is not really "known" when it is viewed from the outside. No book on the beginning of Christianity can be an adequate account unless it does justice to its claim to present the revelation of God.

The purpose of this volume may now be stated more definitely. It is not written with any propagandist aim in view. It is written, however, out of the sincere conviction that we do not understand the beginning of Christianity until we have made every attempt to look through the eyes of those who found such profound significance in these events. I shall seek to trace the course of events according to the soundest historical criticism of our sources of information. But we cannot stop there. We shall go on to try to understand what these events meant to the early Christians themselves. Their interpretations are a vital part of the events which we are investigating. Whether a reader accepts those interpretations is another matter. There are some for whom "Christian truth" is nothing but ancient superstition. There are others who find much of value in the story of Christian beginnings though they reject its central claim. These seek to employ elements from the Christian tradition in a new synthesis. The historian does not propose to control the attitude which the reader will take toward his story. For myself, I believe that the most eloquent apologetic for Christian faith is its clear statement. This story is told that we may know it from the inside.

Part I

THE BACKGROUND OF THE GOSPEL

CHAPTER I

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

CHRISTIANITY had its beginning in Palestine. There is nowhere else it could have begun, for only in that little land was to be found the spiritual soil upon which it could grow. Geographically Palestine appears insignificant. It is only about one hundred and fifty miles from north to south, and from the Mediterranean Sea to the Arabian Desert usually less than sixty. The total area is about the same as that of the state of Vermont. But this land is the spiritual mother of Christendom.

Despite her small area, Palestine was one of the most important sections of the world throughout the history of the ancient Near East. She stood on the highroad between Asia and Africa. For centuries the armies of conquerors marched back and forth over her coastal plain and rugged uplands. After the Jewish people took possession, they were able to maintain a real independence only during fortunate intervals between the supremacy of rival world empires. The world master of the moment must control this thoroughfare of the nations, whether Babylonia, Assyria, Persia, Egypt, Macedonia, Syria, or Rome. But the military and political significance of Palestine dwarfs beside her religious importance. Here alone in the ancient world developed an ethical monotheism which was not a philosophical theory nor a temporary cult, but the living religion of a devoted people.

1. BEFORE THE DAYS OF HEROD

Jesus was born toward the end of the reign of Herod the Great. The latter ruled over all Palestine as a petty monarch, recognizing the overlordship of Rome. He was the son of Antipater, the Idumean adventurer who had been the chief power during the suicidal conflicts which brought the Maccabean kingdom to its inglorious end. Granted the kingship by the Roman senate in 41 B.C., he had managed by 37 B.C. to put himself in actual power in Jerusalem. Until his death in 4 B.C., he ruled with the iron hand of an oriental despot, ruthlessly killing all possible competitors, and reducing the Sanhedrin, or Council of the Jews, to impotence.

The five centuries before the coming of Herod had not been a time of political significance for the Jews. During the period of Persian overlordship (538-332 B.C.) they had been a church rather than a political state. The writings of our Old Testament were gradually edited, and the life of the people was increasingly disciplined by the law. Greek influences began to be felt with the conquest of Alexander. His empire fell apart after his death, and Palestine came under the control of the Ptolemies who ruled Egypt. It was in 198 B.C. that the Seleucid monarchs in Antioch of Syria first gained control of Palestine.

During the next generation the Jews were faced with a supreme crisis because of the infiltration of Greek influence. Greek cities had been founded by Alexander's soldiers, and their culture presented great attractions even to loyal Jews. Now that Judea was his southern border, Antiochus IV feared the presence of a stubborn, alien culture. Supported by the growing Hellenistic influences within Judaism, he sought to suppress Jewish worship, forbade the observance of the law, and set up a heathen altar in the Temple at Jerusalem. The events of this period are well known to us because they inspired the writing of First and Second Maccabees, and the book of Daniel also came out of the crisis. It was one of the most heroic periods of Jewish loyalty to their traditional beliefs.

Jewish opposition was led by the five sons of Mattathias, who raised the standard of resistance. Judas Maccabeus finally regained the Temple, and it was purified for worship in 164 (or 165) B.C. Antiochus was compelled to grant the Jews religious freedom because his attention was demanded in other parts of his distressed empire. The Maccabees did not stop fighting, though the devout "Ḥasidim," later known as Pharisees, were satisfied with religious freedom. Political independence was won by Simon, the last of the brothers, in 142 B.C. He likewise assumed the high priesthood, consolidating into his hands both the spiritual and secular rule. Under the leadership of these Hasmonean priest-kings, the Jews enjoyed their last period of national independence. But it did not mean a restoration of the glories of David and Solomon; it was a worldly kingdom whose power was soon doomed.

The course followed by the Maccabean princes was the familiar one of national aggrandisement. Having secured their own independence, they proceeded to take away the independence of all whom they could conquer. Having successfully resisted Hellenization, they now compelled conquered peoples to become Jews. John Hyrcanus (135-104 B.C.) destroyed the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim as he conquered Samaria and Idumea. Aristobulus completed the conquest of Galilee, which was now colonized with Jews. It is interesting to note that "Galilee of the Gentiles" had been Jewish only about a century when Jesus was a lad in Nazareth. But many of the Jews were out of sympathy with this worldly policy. That bloody warriors should enter the Holy of Holies and serve as high priests at Jerusalem was deplored by the most religious. Pharisees and Sadducees carried on their bitter struggle for political control, so that this internal dissension made the kingdom an easy victim of the oncoming Roman imperialism. Pompey marched into Jerusalem in 63 B.C., and from that time on Palestine's fate was determined at Rome.

2. HEROD THE GREAT

The reign of Herod did restore outward glory and splendor to Palestine. He built Caesarea on the coast, which became his capital, and on the old site of Samaria he founded Sebaste. He built palaces and temples, theaters and castles, baths and aqueducts, the remains of which may be seen today. Instead of destroying what was non-Jewish, as his Maccabean predecessors, he sought to restore the country. Jerusalem was included in his munificent plans. Not only did he build a palace for himself on the western hill, and a citadel at the north end of the Temple enclosure, the Tower of Antonia. He likewise began the rebuilding of the Temple in 20-19 B.C., making it of unrivaled magnificence. He showed his interest in the Jewish people by securing important extraterritorial privileges for the Jews living outside Palestine in the "dispersion." But none of these things made him popular with the devout. At heart he was clearly more interested in the spread of Hellenism than in the Jewish ancestral faith. The temples were dedicated to pagan deities, and the athletic games established at Caesarea showed how far removed he was from the convictions of the pious. This was the time of Hillel and Shammai, the founders of rival schools of interpretation of the law, but both would have agreed in opposition to the worldly Herod.

The picture in the Gospel of Matthew of a jealous tyrant, willing to slaughter all of the male children of Bethlehem to remove a possible rival, provides a fitting introduction to the palace intrigues which saddened his last years. On ascending the throne, he had married Mariamne, a Hasmonean princess who could lend legitimacy to his reign in the eyes of the Jews. In a jealous rage he had her murdered. In the eyes of the people, her two sons were the natural heirs among all of the children of his ten wives. But these fell victim to harem intrigues along with his oldest son Antipater. Shortly before he died, Herod changed his will again, leaving his rule to Archelaus rather than to Herod Antipas. But Herod did not have the final word over the disposition of his kingdom. Rome was master and was eager to maintain a strong frontier on the east against the danger of Parthia, now the great Asiatic power.

According to Luke's version of a parable of Jesus, a certain king went to a far country to procure for himself a kingdom and return. That would seem to us a strange way to secure a kingdom, but it is the story of Archelaus who went to Rome to have his kingship authorized. A delegation of fifty Pharisees, supported by Roman Jews, protested and asked that Palestine be made a province ruled directly by Rome rather than handed over to another Herodian prince. Disorders in Palestine were so great that the governor of Syria came south from Antioch and in the process of restoring order burned Sepphoris, the great Galilean city a few miles from Nazareth. Augustus finally decided to divide the kingdom, giving Archelaus Judea, Samaria, and Idumea; Herod Antipas was to receive Galilee and Perea; and the regions to the northeast fell to still a third brother by the name of Philip.

3. The Sons of Herod

Philip was tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, as Luke correctly states (3:1). This region to the northeast of the Sea of Galilee was largely inhabited by Gentiles; hence there was little objection to putting his image on the coins which he minted. He built Bethsaida Julias near the lake, a city frequently mentioned in the gospels. He also built Caesarea-Philippi, near which the famous confession of Peter took place. He was the most respectable of the brothers, and was just and peaceful during his reign. Jesus appears to have found a haven of retreat in his realm after leaving Galilee. Philip died in A.D. 34. For three years the region was part of the Roman province of Syria, but in A.D. 37 it came to Herod Agrippa I, the king who figures in Acts 12; in A.D. 41 he was given the rule over all of his grandfather's realm.

Herod Antipas ruled over Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39. Perea lay to the east of the Jordan River, and much of it was desert. Its population was only partly Jewish; the Greek cities of the Decapolis were not included in his domain. The recent excavation of Jerash gives us some idea of the developed Hellenism in the Decapolis. Galilee had been Jewish for only a century, but it contained many fanatical opponents of foreign rule. It was a fertile, well-watered country of varied topography. The great plain of Esdraelon separated it from the highland of Samaria. Its hills rose higher and higher toward the north, but on the east there was the big rift in which was cradled the beautiful lake of Galilee. Though it was 680 feet below the sea level, its water was kept fresh by the Jordan River which flowed into the Dead Sea, the lowest point on the surface of the globe.

Nazareth lies in a pocket of hills a few miles from Sepphoris, which had been rebuilt during Jesus' boyhood. Later, Herod transferred the capital to a new city which he had built on the Sea of Galilee and named Tiberias after the ruling emperor. Since it had been built on the site of a cemetery, Jews avoided it; it is never mentioned in the gospels as a seat of Jesus' ministry. His work centered about the lake, the towns named being Capernaum, Magdala, and Chorazin. The witness of the gospel is to a land teeming with villages, and this is corroborated by the testimony of Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century. It must have presented a lively contrast to the deserted region of today.

Herod Antipas was the ruler to whom Jesus owed direct political allegiance. Jesus spoke of him as "that fox" (Luke 13:32); we do not know whether the comparison was with his cleverness or his bloodthirstiness. Apparently Herod soon heard of the work of Jesus. Luke tells us that the wife of one of his officials was a close follower of Jesus among those who gave financial support (8:3). Jesus was warned that Herod sought to kill him. No specific reason is assigned, but it is probable that Herod associated the work of Jesus with that of John the Baptist. John had criticized his marriage to his niece Herodias, a match probably designed to further his political ambitions. But, instead, it led to his downfall. He had divorced the daughter of King Aretas of Arabia in order to marry Herodias; this led to conflict with Arabia which ultimately brought the removal of Herod in A.D. 39.

Archelaus had received the most important half of Palestine, including Samaria and Judea. Samaria had been inhabited by a mixed population since the fall of the northern kingdom. Still, they had shared in the reorganized Jewish worship in the postexilic period. The final break did not come until a considerable time after the completion of the Pentateuch. Hence they shared the Torah, but not the books of the Prophets. For two centuries the Samaritans had a temple on Mount Gerizim. After its destruction by John Hyrcanus, they continued to worship on that mountain. The hostility between the two people was intense. They had no more dealings with each other than were absolutely necessary. Pilgrims from Galilee frequently went along the coast or down the Jordan valley rather than through the highland of Samaria in order to avoid unfriendly contact. We do not know how Jesus was accustomed to make the trip, but Luke and John are the only evangelists who definitely bring Jesus into Samaria. Since the Samaritans joined in the war of independence in A.D. 66 we must not magnify the division between the two peoples. But a Jew who valued purity of descent could not but look down upon a Samaritan.

Judea was the ancient center of Judaism; it contained the sacred city of Jerusalem with the only legitimate sanctuary of their God Yahweh. But Archelaus was not to enjoy its political rule long. The enemies who had opposed his rule at the outset continued their hostility. In A.D. 6 he was accused at Rome of misrule and removed from his post as ethnarch. Instead of experimenting with another Herodian prince, Rome was resolved to turn the territory into a Roman province. Quirinius, the governor of Syria, was put in charge of a census in order to determine the taxable income of the province. This provoked the uprising led by Judas, to which reference is made in Acts 5:37 as well as by Josephus. Obviously Jesus' birth did not occur at the time of that census, and evidence of an earlier one under the same governor of Syria is problematic to say the least.

4. Roman Rule in Palestine

Judea was one of the smallest of the Roman provinces, and in many ways quite insignificant. It was ruled by a procurator of the equestrian order. He made his home in Caesarea on the coast and only occasionally came to Jerusalem, when he would live in the palace built by Herod. Probably because of possible disorders at the feast of the Passover, Pilate was in Jerusalem at the time of the arrest of Jesus. Large powers were placed in the hands of the Jewish Council, for Rome had learned that the only way the Jews could be kept contented was to let them conduct their own affairs. Rome was interested in peace and order and a safe eastern frontier; she was intent upon the full collection of taxes; but beyond that the Jews were free to follow their own customs.

The Sanhedrin or Council regained the power and prestige which it had lost under Herod. It was composed of 71 members drawn from priests, scribes, and elders, and inducted by the laying on of hands. The high priest presided over the meetings, which were held in the hall of hewn stones in the Temple. The membership was fairly evenly divided between Pharisees and Sadducees. The body had jurisdiction over all matters involved in the Torah, including the death penalty in the case of religious offenses. Judea was divided into eleven topographies with lesser councils. These two types of courts are referred to in Matthew 5:22. In addition to these, the Greek cities, Samaria, and Idumea had separate government.

Procurators were essentially finance officials and military governors. The taxes were collected by imperial officials; only the customs were farmed out to "publicans" or tax collectors, a synonym in the gospels for a despised class of men. In border towns like Capernaum and Bethsaida they would have been particularly numerous. Copper coins were minted in Palestine itself, but silver and gold coins from outside circulated of necessity. These would bear Caesar's image. The Roman troops were provincials. Jews had been exempted from military service since the days of Julius Caesar. We must not suppose that it was because they were pacifists, for in war after war they showed themselves to be fierce fighters. But men who had conscientious scruples against carrying weapons on one day of the week made inconvenient soldiers; and there was no lack of applicants at this time to fill the Roman legions.

On the whole, Roman rule was not oppressive. Two lambs and an ox were to be sacrificed on behalf of the emperor each day. Beyond that, no demands were made which might offend a Jew's abhorrence of idolatry. Nevertheless, there was great restlessness. The Roman governors were not men of forceful character nor of sympathetic understanding. Yet it is clear that anyone would have had difficulty in successfully governing this turbulent people. Strangely, the governor about whom we know the most is Pontius Pilate, who served from A.D. 26 to 36. When he took some of the Temple treasure for the very laudable purpose of improving the water supply of the city of Jerusalem, he brought a veritable hornet's nest down about his head. When his soldiers carried their standards into the city, even though the idolatrous images were covered, the people were furious.

Undoubtedly this unrest was accentuated by economic causes. For a long time the population of Palestine had been growing rapidly. With the cessation of wars at the coming of a Roman peace, this check no longer restricted growth. Overpopulation is a probable conclusion to be drawn from the gospel picture of teeming crowds and thronging villages. Added to this was the burden of double taxation. We shall see in the next chapter what enormous revenues the Temple demanded in the name of God's law. When the governmental exactions were added to this, it is estimated that 40 per cent of the average income was taken in taxes. No wonder the radical teachers who insisted that God's people must not be subservient to a heathen power found a ready ear with many!

The economic life of Palestine, a country without precious metals, was predominantly agricultural. Many artisans followed their handicrafts in villages like Nazareth; more than forty trades are witnessed from documents near this time. Yet most of the peasants living in the villages worked the soil. Some came into possession of big estates supervised by stewards. Many more fell into debt and lost their small holdings. There were tenant farmers who paid fixed rent as in Mark's allegory of the vineyard (12:1-9). Others were landless laborers waiting for someone to hire them (Matt. 20:1-15).

Among the chief products were grain, olives, grapes, and other fruit. Today Palestine is famous for its citrous fruits. Date palms were raised near Jericho. Despite the large population, Palestine was self-sufficient in food in good years. Nonarable land was used for grazing. Tending sheep and goats provided a living in the hills as did fishing by the Sea of Galilee. But crop failures and unemployment could quickly turn the poor into desperate brigands.

Below the hired laborers were the many slaves. It should not be forgotten that the word translated in our Bibles as "servant" really meant "slave." The Hebrew slaves served for only six years. Their lot was not as difficult as that of the Canaanite slaves, whose servitude was permanent. The economic relationships of the time are correctly portrayed when it is assumed in Matthew 25:14 ff. that the profit made by slaves in the use of their master's capital belonged to him rather than to the slaves.

In cities like Sepphoris in Galilee and Jerusalem there were many merchants. Two hundred and forty articles of commerce are said to be mentioned in Jewish sources of the general period. These merchants, together with the great landed proprietors, the rich bankers, and the high priests, made an aristocracy much more conciliatory toward Rome than the restless masses. It was among the latter that the messianic hope was most fervently held. That seemed to offer release from the frustration of the present. The humble and downtrodden sought a firmer basis for their material and spiritual lives.

5. The Religious Parties

No survey of first-century Palestine would be complete without reference to the parties which had brought a tragic division since the days of the Maccabees. The *Sadducees* represented the old aristocratic families and dominated the Temple hierarchy. The name may have been derived from Zadok, a priest at the time of Solomon. They were the conservative party who rejected the belief in the resurrection on the ground that it was not taught in the Torah. They accepted the political realities of the day, and sought only to profit as far as possible from collaboration with Rome. Though their stronghold was in Jerusalem, it has been conjectured from their positions on cult ritual that they represented the interests of the landowning aristocracy. The Sadducees disappeared with the fall of Jerusalem, and it is interesting that in the New Testament we meet with them only in the capital city.

The *Pharisees* are described by Josephus as "a body of Jews who profess to be more religious than the rest and to explain the laws more precisely." The origin of the name is a matter of dispute, but probably it means "separatists." But from what did they originally separate themselves? Their own answer might have been, "From all that defiles." Though their number is said to have been only about five thousand, they exercised the most influential leadership among the people. Their aim was to apply the law to all of life. They were more harsh than the Sadducees in the interpretation of the criminal code. They ascribed to their traditions an authority equal to scripture. Hence they were able to develop belief in the resurrection, which was obviously not taught in the law. They were the progressive religious group with whom the future of Jewish religion was to rest. The leadership which survived the fall of Jerusalem came from the Pharisees, and modern Judaism is the daughter of Pharisaism. It has been held that the Pharisaic positions represented the plebeian, urban interest. That may be so, but they themselves believed that they were only claiming all of life for God. The opposition of the Pharisees to Jesus and the early church must not blind our eyes to the fact that they were among the most religious and devoted of the Jewish people.

The *Essenes* are relatively well known to us because of the great interest which Josephus had in them. They evidently represented an ascetic Jewish development under Greek Pythagorean influence. They were closely organized into communities which rejected private property and marriage, though they raised the children of others. They required a three-year period of probation before admitting candidates by a strong oath. After that, all oaths were forbidden them, trade was rejected, and animal sacrifices were repudiated. The Essenes were more strict in the observance of the sabbath and stressed ceremonial purity through frequent lustrations. This syncretistic development shows how varied Judaism might be during the first century. Some scholars used to try to connect John the Baptist and Jesus with the Essenes, but for John the Baptist that is improbable and for Jesus it is certainly wrong. They represent a zealous piety influenced by quite non-Jewish points of view.

Josephus also speaks of "the fourth philosophy," which during the decade of the sixties acquired the name of *Zealots*. They might be described as left-wing Pharisees with a definitely political interest. While the Pharisees yearned for God's overthrow of the Roman yoke, most of them did not advocate direct action. The Zealots did. Judas the Galilean taught that it was a disgrace for the people of God to suffer under the heathen yoke. The nonresistance teaching of Jesus was almost certainly formulated in opposition to this agitation. But the unrest grew stronger through the years, and it is evident that the Zealots became an increasingly popular patriotic party. In a later chapter we shall have occasion to return to the Palestinian disorders which climaxed in the revolt against Rome in A.D. 66.

But these four groups by no means exhaust the variety of interests in Palestine. Not only were there large numbers of Gentiles, who were not confined to the Greek cities within the borders of Palestine. Thousands of Jews belonged to none of these party groups. They were the so-called "people of the land." Many respected the leadership of the Pharisees, but were ignorant of the detailed religious duties which were prescribed. Others doubtless despised those who in their zeal had tended to professionalize religion. Still others were the worldly and nonreligious who are to be found in all civilizations. The number and importance of these *'ammê ha-'ares* is a matter of dispute. But the gospels would give the impression that the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" constituted a large number in the Galilean villages.

6. THE DIASPORA

Though Palestine was the spiritual home of all Jews, it was in the first century the geographical residence of only a part. The "dispersion" was widespread both to the east and to the west. From the days of the captivity in Babylonia, Jews had continued to reside in the Euphrates valley. Since that time Egypt had also been the home of an extensive colony. The Egyptian Jews became so Hellenized that beginning in the third century B.C. they translated their scriptures into Greek. This is known as the Septuagint because of the legend that it was prepared by some seventy elders. This Greek-speaking Judaism produced important literature which the Christians preserved when they took over the Septuagint as their Old Testament. Philo was a contemporary of Jesus who lived in Alexandria; he went far in uniting conceptions from Greek philosophy with devotion to the Pentateuch. Babylonian Judaism was prominent in the later developments during post-Christian times, but only the Christians developed the work of Philo in synthesizing Hebraic and Greek thought. But in neither Egypt nor Babylonia is there clear evidence of Christian beginnings in New Testament times.

It was otherwise with Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome. In all of these areas important Jewish colonies were to be found in the first century. Here the Greek language was adopted by Jews, except in Syria, where Aramaic was widely used. We have already mentioned the important privileges which Herod the Great had secured for these dispersion Jews. While some merchants became strongly assimilated to the life of their adopted country, many lived in ghettos apart from Hellenistic civilization. They were still bound to their spiritual fatherland by the payment of the Temple tax, and by the festival pilgrimages, which all hoped to take at some time during their lives. Yet interest in the sacrificial cultus decayed among these who had so little actual relation to it. Their synagogues became the center of their religious worship and also of their national life. When the great revolt came in A.D. 66 the Jews of the dispersion remained loyal to Rome and did not join in the uprising. Tolerance of their customs had been granted as a special privilege to a national religion. Religious ties with Palestine were not strong enough to lead them to sacrifice the advantages which they enjoyed, living in well-governed cities of imperial provinces. When we come to the gentile mission led by the apostle Paul, we shall return to the life of the Hellenized Jews and the groups which gathered about their synagogues.

SUGGESTED SOURCE READINGS

1. BEFORE THE DAYS OF HEROD: I Macc. 1:41-64; 4:52-61.
2. HEROD THE GREAT: Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* xvi. 5.
3. THE SONS OF HEROD: *Wars of the Jews* ii. 9.
4. ROMAN RULE IN PALESTINE: Josephus, *Ant.* xviii. 3; Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 4.
5. The RELIGIOUS PARTIES: Josephus, *Ant.* xviii. 1.
6. THE DIASPORA: Philo, *Against Flaccus.*

CHAPTER II

RELIGIOUS LIFE AMONG THE JEWS

All living religion passes through a process of development. Though men may look upon their beliefs as revealed and unchanging, the historian is aware that they never remain exactly the same through long periods of time. Certainly this was true of Jewish religion. We are now able to trace this development within the framework of a much wider knowledge of the ancient Near East than was the case even a generation ago. But that interesting story does not concern us here. The background for Christianity is not the preaching of the eighth-century prophets, but the teaching of the first-century rabbis. The problem for investigation is not what the Old Testament actually taught, but what the Jews of this period understood their scriptures to mean.

There is always a temptation for Christian students to look upon the late Judaism in terms of its preparation for Christianity. While the Christian church did emerge from the later Judaism, that was only one direction in which development took place. First-century Judaism is more truly viewed as one stage in the long development of the Jewish religion. If this faith is to be viewed "from the inside," it must not be looked upon as a preparation for something else, but as a religion which considers itself final and ultimate. Anyone who asks for a sympathetic view of Christianity must in fairness seek to make an evaluation of its Jewish heritage that is appreciative and just.

Unfortunately there was a time when Christian scholarship failed to do this. Partisan and apologetic pictures have been drawn of first-century Judaism, portraying it as a completely formalized and decadent religion. It has been described as a mechanical legalism, knowing only a distant God far removed from the worshipers, absorbed in their formal duties. It has been assumed that there was a great decline after the days when the Old Testament books were written, and only Christianity restored a living faith in God. But this is a distorted picture which is untrue and unfair. It would be a poor compliment to Christianity to supplant such a decadent faith. In fact, Christianity failed to win most of these Jews who were supposed to have lost the former height of their spiritual religion. Change brings both gains and losses. If at some points Jewish faith may have stood at a lower level, there were other respects in which it had grown in maturity and spirituality. The years immediately preceding the Christian movement were years of tremendous activity and notable advance.

The *sources* for our knowledge of the Jewish religion of this period are much too extensive for the beginning student even to survey. But he should know what they are, and where they may be found. Extensive Jewish writings which were not included in the Hebrew canon of scripture were preserved in the Septuagint, or Greek translation of the Old Testament. These are known as the Apocrypha. Some other writings largely apocalyptic in character, were preserved by early Christian groups. Apocalypses purported to contain revelations concerning the future and the heavenly worlds. These are usually referred to as the Pseudepigrapha, because many of them were written under assumed names of ancient worthies. But since none of these ever became official among the main body of orthodox Jews, no just picture can be drawn from these sources alone.

The official Jewish interpretations of the Old Testament were at this time handed down as oral tradition. About A.D. 200 these were first committed to writing through the efforts of Rabbi Judah. The sixty-three tractates of the Mishnah (from the Hebrew word for "repeat") were in turn the basis for the later Gemara. Together these comprise the Talmud. Despite the fact that the writing of the Mishnah was considerably later than the New Testament, it is an invaluable source of information about Jewish religion at the time of Christ. It contained the authoritative teaching preserved by those Jews who became the center of Jewish orthodoxy. In addition to the Mishnah, the earliest portions of the Jewish prayer book and the early Targums (translations of the Old Testament into Aramaic) preserve material which may be used, if careful discrimination is made. Yet we must guard against the error of assuming that the later "normative" Judaism was the only Judaism at the time of Christ. The catastrophe in the year 70 and again in 135 destroyed many movements which had been living and vital at the earlier period.

1. God and His Angels

Religion begins and ends with God. The Jews believed in the living eternal God, who was the one and only deity. He was a transcendent being, so holy that his name, Yahweh, should not be uttered by mortal man. He was to be praised as the Creator of heaven and earth. He was to be magnified as the God of history who had redeemed his people Israel. He was the God of the fathers, of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob; and he was the God to whom the most humble Jew might turn in prayer. He was the King of the universe, and the Father of all the righteous. "Our Father, who art in heaven," was a typical rabbinic form of address toward God. While in a certain sense he dwelt in his Temple at Jerusalem, his throne was in the highest heaven, and he ruled over all.

Since he was surrounded by innumerable angels, he might be called "the Lord of spirits." These superterrestrial beings were thought of as made either on the second day of creation or continually. They might serve as messengers for God, but primarily they enhanced the splendor of the heavenly court. Man's thought of God is inevitably molded by the analogies of his social experience; oriental courts contributed here to the imagery used in portraying the divine majesty. Archangels were at their head, of whom Gabriel, Raphael, and Michael were the most prominent. Postexilic Judaism had witnessed an extensive development in angelology. Originally these angels had been connected with the stars. In pagan religions the worship of the heavenly bodies occupied a prominent place. Inevitably a temptation to worship these angelic beings confronted their monotheistic faith.

But not all angels performed the will of God. In addition to the good angels there were the fallen angels. In the Old Testament, Satan is the accuser before the presence of God, not an actual opponent of God. But an increasing dualism had come into

Jewish religion. Now Satan was identified with the devil, and with Beliar, the god of the underworld. Beelzebul is one of the names given in the gospels. He was the head of the kingdom of evil that stood opposed to God. These demons caused disease, and enticed men to their destruction. The heavens above were also peopled by fallen angelic powers. According to Paul, it was these "rulers of this age" who had crucified the Lord of glory. These "principalities and powers" were the worst enemies with which man had to contend; his wrestling was with them, not simply with flesh and blood.

It is readily seen that monotheism did not mean to a Jew that there was only one superhuman being. His concept of the divine was quite fluid. The inclination to personalize what we would look on as an abstraction was very strong. Such concepts as "the Wisdom of God" and "the Spirit of God" were treated almost as separate beings. Various hypostases were believed in. When Paul used Death and Sin as if they were personal powers he illustrated a type of thinking which was very prevalent. Much freedom for speculation was open in these realms. Then as now, Judaism did not demand uniformity in belief but conformity in practice.

2. Sinful Man

The other pole of religion is always man, for religion is the fellowship of man with God. While the Jews had nothing akin to a scientific knowledge of human nature, they did hold certain religious presuppositions. Greek thought had tended to picture man in terms of a rational soul imprisoned in a material body. This type of dualism does not correspond to the Jewish view. They thought of a body-soul that must go hand in hand. When the soul was in Sheol after death its existence was shadowy and removed from fellowship with Yahweh. Release from the body was not salvation but terrible misfortune. Jewish hope beyond the grave looked forward to resurrection of the body, through which alone man could enjoy full existence. Only under Greek influence did Jews think in terms of the immortality of the soul.

While man had been created in the image of God, he had succumbed to sin because of the evil impulse within him. Man's life was the seat of a conflict between the good impulse and the evil impulse. This was not equivalent to a struggle between mind and body. The evil impulse was not located in the body, but in the total personality. This was graphically portrayed in the rabbinic story of the blind man and the lame man, each of whom denied that he had stolen some apples. Neither by himself could have done so, but the blind man had carried the lame man who had the eyes to see them. So the evil impulse was not confined to the body nor to the mind, but was ascribed to both together.

Though there were varying shades of opinion, Jews believed in both the providence of God and in human freedom. The Jewish mind did not work according to strict rules of logic laid down by systematic thinkers. Their interests were practical, and religion seemed to demand both providential control and human freedom. Their God was holy, but at the same time full of lovingkindness and tender mercy. Their God was righteous, but repentance could avail much. The value of repentance was sounded over and over again by the early rabbis. We must never suppose that the first-century Jew had no knowledge of the forgiveness of sins.

3. THE TORAH

But the Jew did not concern himself primarily with speculative theological dogmas. The center of his religion was the will of God revealed in the Torah. Torah means teaching. While the common translation is "law," it was in no sense confined to statute law; it was the divine teaching for men. From the days of Deuteronomy, and especially since Ezra, the Book occupied a central place in Jewish religion. The written Torah now comprised the Pentateuch, or the first five books of the Bible. We must ignore all that we may know of its historical evolution, and the documentary analyses of its contents. For the first-century Jew, the Torah had been created before the world, and was the pattern for its creation. According to tradition, it had been offered to all of the nations, but only Israel had accepted it. Hence, its possession was Israel's greatest glory, and its faithful observance was the highest delight of the loyal Jew. The possession of the Torah was the proof that God had chosen them as his people.

Under these circumstances, the devout Jew did not look upon the keeping of the law as a burden. His feeling was expressed by the Psalmist who wrote: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the company of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night" (1:1-2). We can picture the scribe studying its chapters, crooning over its holy syllables, and glorying in his blessed privileges. When we read an acrostic Psalm in praise of the law, such as the 119th, we see what satisfaction the devout took in this sacred possession.

In addition to the written Torah, there were the traditions of the elders, which were later written down as the Mishnah. The written Torah was akin to an unchangeable constitution. But amid the shifting conditions of life, adaptation and application were essential. The only loophole to progress which was open to a religion of obedience to an unchanging Torah lay in the field of "interpretation." There were two different types of this oral tradition. The preceptive matter was called Halakah; that was formulated through agreement on the part of the leading rabbis. The nonpreceptive material, or Haggadah, was devout expansions which did not carry the same authority. Typical examples within the New Testament are Paul's assumption that the rock which Moses struck followed the children of Israel (I Cor. 10:4), and that the law was given through angels (Gal. 3:19). The Halakah was naturally the more important, and it was transmitted orally from teacher to teacher. According to theory, it went back through the Great Synagogue formed by Ezra to Moses and was part of the authoritative word of God.

At the time of Jesus there were still competing schools of scribes. Those of the Pharisees accepted the oral traditions as of equal standing with the written Torah. The Sadducees not only had different interpretations at some points but they refused to equate tradition with scripture. Hillel and Shammai were great teachers among the Pharisees who had established rival schools in the previous generation. The more liberal and humane school of Hillel derived its tradition from scripture. The stricter and more severe school of Shammai insisted that tradition was self-standing and did not require proof from scripture. Gamaliel, who according to Acts was a teacher of Paul, belonged to the school of Hillel. These divergent interpretations must be borne in mind when we come to the teaching of Jesus on such an issue as divorce. How familiar was a layman like Jesus with all of the current Halakah as taught in the schools?

An important factor in keeping the unchangeable scripture up-to-date was the allegorical method of interpretation. Greeks employed it in interpreting Homer. Philo, the Alexandrian Jew, could read most of the Platonic philosophy into the Pentateuch by the help of its subtle possibilities. Where the literal text did not offer a satisfactory meaning, the ingenuity of the interpreter could find a more spiritual significance. Since Paul was brought up on this method of using scripture, he employed it freely. For instance, Sarah and Hagar stood for two covenants, bearing children to freedom and to slavery.

4. LIFE UNDER THE LAW

In some circles today it is popular to describe Christianity as a "way of life." Historically speaking, that would be a much more accurate characterization of Judaism. Not a creed but a *code of conduct* has united the Jewish people. That code prescribed the life of a son of the Torah. The aim of the devout Pharisee was to make every act conform to the will of God. Religion was not an isolated area of life. Every detail of human existence should accord with the divine instruction. This meant that knowledge of the Torah was the prerequisite for virtue. The ignorant man, who did not know the divine statutes, inevitably transgressed God's commandments. Hence, the study of the Torah was looked upon as the highest of virtues. In order to assist in the faithful observance of every detail of the law, associations of the pious, or *haberim,* were formed. These men pledged themselves to keep the Torah; when vegetables were purchased from them, one could be sure that they had been tithed. But many "people of the land" either lacked the knowledge or the will to practice such faithful observance. Within the company of his fellow Associates, the individual Pharisee might guard against such unwitting sin.

There were three prominent outward marks of life under the Torah: circumcision, the food laws, and the sabbath. While other ancient peoples practiced *circumcision,* among the Jews it was looked upon as the seal of the covenant between God and the sons of Abraham. It had religious rather than medical significance. Jewish sons were to be circumcised on the eighth day, and male proselytes to the Jewish faith were admitted by the rite of circumcision. This was to become a prominent point on which the separation of Christianity from Judaism hinged.

The *food laws* furnished a second outward mark of Jewish life. The devout Jew could not have table fellowship with Gentiles, or even with Jews who were careless in these observances. The Torah contained elaborate regulations on clean and unclean foods, and on prescribed methods of slaughter. The selection of food for any meal involved obedience or disobedience to the holy God. Here again was a critical issue for the early Christians. Since their central act of worship lay in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the continued observance of Jewish food restrictions presented a problem.

The third distinctive custom lay in the observance of the *sabbath*. Particularly when he was surrounded by pagan neighbors, the Jew who closed his place of business and abstained from all work on the seventh day of the week was a marked individual. The Old Testament contains very little about the sabbath beyond the blanket prohibition of all work. It remained for the oral tradition to develop this in detail. The objective of scribal definition was not to make this command more difficult, but to permit what was absolutely necessary. There were listed thirty-nine major classifications of what constituted work. The longest permissible journey was about two thirds of a mile. The heaviest burden that might be carried was the weight of a fig.

The Christian reader must not approach the 156 double pages of the Babylonian Talmud which are filled with these decisions with the idea that this is ludicrous hairsplitting. If the law of God forbade all work on one day of the week, nothing could be more important for the devout man than to have at hand an authoritative decision on every possibility which he might face. So important was this thought to be in the eyes of God that if Israel observed two sabbaths strictly, he must send his deliverance. Yet it was a day of feasting rather than of fasting. No law required attendance at the synagogue, though the prohibition of work did provide an opportunity for services of worship.

We must never suppose from this absorption with the ritual requirements of Torah that its ethical content was neglected. From such books as the Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach, and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, and then again from the rabbinic expositions of the Pentateuch we see a deepening and ennobling of the ethical ideal. The ethical teaching of Jesus should not be compared with the cruder portions of the Old Testament but with words like these:

> Let each one love his brother and put away hatred from your hearts, love one another in deed, and in word, and in the inclination of the soul. . . . . And if a man sin against you, cast forth the poison of hate and speak peaceably to him, and in thy soul hold not guile; and if he confess and repent, forgive him. . . . . But if he be shameless and persists in his wrongdoing, even so forgive him from the heart, and leave to God the avenging.

It was a first-century rabbi who left the saying, "Let the honor of thy fellow be dear to thee as thine own" (R. Eliezer in *Aboth* 2:10).

The piety of the layman was also expressed in specific religious exercises. Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving were special marks of religious living. The evangelist Matthew grouped together the teaching of Jesus on these points because they were the traditional marks of piety (6:1-18). Judaism was a religion of *prayer*. The religious devotion which has produced the Psalter continued to inspire great expressions of prayer. Many of the petitions in the Shemoneh Esreh, or prayer of eighteen benedictions, go back to the first century. It was customary to stand when praying, and to face Jerusalem if away from the holy city. Three times in the day the devout Jew turned to God in prayer.

Fasting was prescribed on certain days, the chief of which was the Day of Atonement. In addition to these, the devout kept many voluntary fasts to express their humiliation before God. When the Pharisee in Jesus' parable emphasized that he fasted twice a week, he referred to the Monday and Thursday fasts of the pious (Luke 18:12). *Almsgiving* was also a meritorious work which brought a high reward. That was expected to come through good fortune in this life, and salvation in the age to come. Some gave so liberally that a limit had to be placed in the second century. When Zacchaeus offered to give one half of his goods to feed the poor (Luke 19:8) this was far in excess of that maximum.

5. THE NURTURE OF RELIGION

This piety was nurtured through two major religious institutions, the synagogue and the Temple. The *synagogue* arose during the postexilic period, doubtless among Jews who were separated from the Temple. It was a unique institution, promoting a spiritual worship that was destined to supplant the older Temple. One could be established wherever ten Jews were found. How completely it had become the vital center of Jewish piety is seen in the way Judaism survived the destruction of the Temple. Many post-Christian synagogue buildings have been excavated by modern archaeologists, and from their evidence we may deduce much about these centers of worship. The men sat on benches around the wall, or on mats in the center; the women sat in the gallery. The seats facing the room and on either side of the chest containing the Torah rolls were for the elders; one of these was "the seat of Moses," referred to in Matthew 23:2. To the amazement of modern scholars, some of these synagogues contain pictures, as would never have been expected from the later rabbinic regulations.

Services were held on several evenings each week and a central service on the morning of the sabbath (Luke 4:16 ff.). The liturgical section was opened by the recitation of the Shema; this was a confession of faith drawn from Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; and Numbers 15:37-41. These passages were also enclosed in the phylacteries which the devout wore on their forehead and left arm, except on the sabbath (Matt. 23:5). Following the Shema came the prayers of praise, petition, and thanksgiving, to which the community responded with the Amen. Selections were then read from the law and from the prophets. In Palestine the reading was followed by the translation into Aramaic (Targum), the spoken language of the people. In the Dispersion, the scripture lessons were read from the Septuagint. After the reading came the teaching, which consisted primarily of exposition of the scripture. Jesus and Paul were both able to speak in the synagogues wherever they went. This shows that the teaching was not confined to a fixed ministry.

We have noted that at the time of Christ the *Temple* was in process of rebuilding. As was the custom in the Near East, this was not a single building, but a large sacred area. It stood on a commanding site on the eastern hill of the city; its walls of white marble, in places covered with gold, made an impressive appearance as pilgrims ascended the holy hill. The Shushan Gate on the east admitted the chief processions, but the entrances on the west and south were more frequently used by the residents of the city.

The outer court was a huge enclosure paved with stones and surrounded by cloisters. On the east stood Solomon's porch, where Peter addressed a multitude (Acts 3:11). This outer court was full of activity. Here the moneychangers set up their tables when the Temple tax was to be paid (Mark 11:15 f.). Here the animals used in sacrifice might be purchased, a great convenience for visitors from a distance. It would be a misfortune to bring an animal for sacrifice, only to have it rejected as blemished. Gentiles could go no further than this outer court (Acts 21:29). In the museum at Istanbul one may see today an example of the signs which stood over the gates to the inner court: "No stranger is to enter within the balustrade and embankment around the sacred place. Whoever is caught will be answerable for his death, which will ensue."

The inner court was divided again into a court for the women on the east, and one for the men on the west. In the former stood the thirteen trumpets for freewill offerings, where the widow must have placed her mite (Mark 12:41 ff.). Within the men's court was the section reserved for the priests, and the great altar of Burnt Offering. Here, in addition to the countless private offerings, took place the regular daily cultus for the people. A burnt offering was made in the early morning, and at three in the afternoon. To the west stood the Temple house proper, which was divided into two sections. In the Holy Place stood the table for the loaves of the Presence, the great lampstand, and the altar of incense. A great curtain shut off the Holy of Holies, which was entirely empty, entered only on the Day of Atonement, and by no one except the high priest.

The priesthood of the Temple was a hereditary caste. The priests were divided into twenty-four orders, each of which worked a week at a time. Positions for the day's work were distributed by lot, as witnessed by the story of Zechariah (Luke 1:9). Their helpers, the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, as well as all the people, were also divided into twenty-four classes. Representatives of the laity were to be present at every sacrifice. Psalms were sung at the time of the burnt offering, accompanied by cymbals, harps, and trumpets. Since their duties required service in the Temple only a few weeks in the year, many priests lived in Jericho or elsewhere outside Jerusalem.

The thousands of priests were supported by the combination of all of the offerings prescribed in the Pentateuch. The sin offerings, guilt offerings, food offerings, thank offerings, first fruits, tithes, second tithes, and vows were all distributed among the priests. In addition, for the upkeep of the Temple cultus, the half shekel was collected (Matt. 17:24 ff.) It is not strange that the Temple became a huge treasury and really the bank of Jerusalem. Through the control of its wealth, the high priestly families held the dominant position in Jerusalem society.

Three great festivals climaxed the Jewish religious year. The eating of the passover lamb on the night of Nisan 15 was followed by the seven-day feast of unleavened bread. Fifty days later came the feast of Pentecost, the offering of the first fruits. The feast of Tabernacles was the great fall harvest festival. Jewish law prescribed that all these must be celebrated in Jerusalem. While this was not possible for all, great crowds of pilgrims were welcomed from all over the world. It has been estimated that Jerusalem at least trebled in population during these festivals. The sacred processions made these occasions of gay festivity. We can have little realization of the attraction of these massed pageants of worship. Nearly twenty-five years after becoming a Christian, Paul risked his life to reach Jerusalem in time for Pentecost.

6. The Messianic Hope

Though life under the law stood at the center of Judaism, their religion had also another pole. That was the messianic hope. It was the expectation of a time when God and his people would be fully vindicated and the dominant heathen powers overthrown. It was impossible to reconcile God's promises with the wretchedness of the present. The righteousness of God required that he step in to vindicate his people and to put down the wicked. Hence the righteous devoutly hoped for "the consolation of Israel."

Not all Jews had an equal interest in the messianic hope. Particularly the high priests and the Sadducean leaders were quite content to make their peace with the ruling worldly powers. Likewise, there was wide variety of opinion among those who did cling to the hope. Uniformity and conformity were called for in the interpretation of the law, but wide latitude in private opinion was permissible with reference to the hope. Since not a single expression about the messianic deliverance is preserved from any rabbi before A.D. 70, we are necessarily dependent upon the Pseudepigrapha for our contemporary data, supplemented by the information which may be drawn from the New Testament itself.

Three main forms of the messianic hope may be distinguished. The earlier prophetic type had looked forward to a restoration of the kingdom to Israel, when she would triumph over her foes. Since the original expectation had not included a resurrection of the dead, only the last generation could share in the blessing. But a time came when this political and national type of hope no longer satisfied the more spiritual souls. With the increasing dualism, they conceived of the enemies of God not so much as human pagan powers, but as supernatural forces of evil. Also, this world could never be a fit place for God's salvation, but must be replaced by a new world.

This later form of hope (which is often designated apocalyptic) developed these ideas in various ways. In contrast to the present age stood the age to come. The end of the present age would be indicated by the coming of persecution, disasters, and calamities. The victory of God was not simply a victory over the political enemies of Israel; it was a conquest of all the supernatural powers of evil. They would wage a last desperate struggle against Israel. But out of these woes a new age would be born, after the complete defeat of the powers of evil. The resurrection of the dead and the judgment would bring to a close the present age and introduce the age to come. The coming age would not be for the last generation alone, but the righteous of all time would be raised up to participate.

But not all Jews were willing to give up the idea of a political triumph over their national enemies. In the post-Christian apocalypses and in the later rabbis, we find a combined form of hope. Between this age and the age to come, there would be an intermediate period, which has sometimes been characterized as "the

Jewish good time." After this temporary period of triumph would come the end of the age and the introduction of the age to come. In Fourth Ezra the period is four hundred years, after which the Messiah would die (7:29). It will become apparent that both Paul and the book of Revelation were influenced by this third type of double hope.

No brief summary can give any adequate picture of the bewildering variety of representations of the future. One interesting feature bearing on the New Testament was the expectation that Elijah would come to "restore all things" (Mark 9:12; Mal. 4). Sometimes there was elaboration of the future punishment in Gehenna, and of the fabulous blessings of the new age. One visionary predicted, "On one vine will be a thousand clusters, each cluster of a thousand grapes, and each grape will yield a kor of wine" (Bar. 29:5). But the more spiritual souls were content not to go into detail about the victory of God "in those days."

The messianic hope was essentially the hope of a new age when God would triumph. Only in some of the portrayals was the rule delegated to a Messiah who was anointed to reign as God's representative. A relatively small number of passages in the Old Testament mention such a Messiah. Among the documents from a time near the New Testament period, the Psalms of Solomon contain the most elaborate description of the coming king of the house of David:

> Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them
>   their king, the son of David.
>   at the time in which thou seest, O God,
>   that he may reign over Israel thy servant.
> Gird him with strength
>   that he may shatter unrighteous rulers
>   and that he may purge Jerusalem from nations
>   that trample her down to destruction. (17:21-22.)

This hope for a scion of the house of David belonged with the prophetic type of messianic expectation. With the other more spiritual type of hope, there sometimes went another more transcendent type of "Anointed One." It was as different a figure as the type of hope with which it was connected. In the Parables of Enoch we read of a figure called the "Son of man." This had appeared first in Daniel as a designation for the Jewish people, in contrast to the great worldly empires symbolized by beasts. But in Enoch the Son of man refers to an individual who is God's representative as ruler and judge in the age to come. He is presented as one chosen and hidden before the creation of the world. When he is revealed, he will put down the kings and mighty ones and they shall be handed over to destruction. The righteous and elect shall be saved, and they shall abide and eat with that Son of man.

Obviously it is impossible to refer to the Jewish messianic hope as if that were a fixed series of expectations. We are dealing with fluid conceptions where there was wide variety of opinion; but nowhere is there witness to the idea that the Messiah must suffer. First through the experience of Jesus was that idea discovered in the Old Testament. That God's anointed ruler should be a carpenter-teacher who suffered a criminal's death was an idea for which there was no preparation in contemporary teaching. It is little wonder that it was inconceivable to so many Jews. But Christians must seek to understand what the Jewish messianic expectations actually were. The basic idea was that a time would come when God would vindicate his righteousness by delivering his people from all evil.

SUGGESTED SOURCE READINGS

The Wisdom of Sirach: 17; 19:20-24; 23:1-3; 39:1-11.
Enoch 22, 40, 45–46.
Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: Gad 6:1-7.
IV Ezra 3:4-32; 7:26-44; 8:19-36.
Mishnah: Tractate *Aboth* 4; *Berakoth* 6; *Pesahim* 10; *Megillah* 4.

Part II

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE GOSPEL

CHAPTER III

THE SOURCES OF OUR KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS

Christianity had its origin in the interpretation of the career of Jesus of Nazareth. Naturally, a very different conclusion would be necessary if it could be proved that no such individual ever lived. Various attempts have been made during the past century to prove that the gospel stories are simply the projection into history of myths of a cult god. These scholars have then gone on to offer competing explanations of the beginning of Christianity. None of these reconstructions has been sufficiently important in the American scene to require exposition here. It is safe to say that disbelief in the historicity of Jesus is supported today by no competent historian. Yet it is important to know what the sources of our information about him actually are.

1. Roman References to Jesus

Probably the earliest Latin author to refer to Jesus was Pliny, the governor of Bithynia. He wrote to the emperor Trajan about A.D. 112 that the Christians "sing hymns to Christ as if he were a God." May it not be that he was a god who had no more historical existence than Attis or the other dying and rising gods of the ancient world? How may we prove that he or any other ancient figure actually lived? What of Abraham or Moses? What of Romulus and Remus? What of Zoroaster and Orpheus? Were they historical or were they mythical?

Three types of proof may be offered for the historicity of a person in antiquity: (1) his writings; (2) the effect of his life; (3) contemporary testimony. Of course it is possible to insist that writings are forgeries, but in the case of Jesus there is not one book or one letter claimed for him. The only time it was said that he wrote, it was on the sand, and that was erased by the next gust of wind. On the second point, it must be admitted that Jesus did not make any marked impression on the Roman Empire of his day. During his lifetime, there is no evidence that he was ever heard of outside of Palestine, a relatively insignificant border province. Even there his career was "headline news" for only a short time. We should never forget that it was not Jesus who transformed the ancient world; it was a message which was preached about him that changed the course of history.

We are left then to contemporary testimony, and here it must be confessed that non-Christian references are meager. Though "Acts of Pilate" were forged by both Christians and pagans, no genuine report of the crucifixion was ever published. In addition to the passage in Pliny, only two or three references in Latin authors have been preserved. Suetonius (77-114) wrote in his *Life of Claudius,* "As the Jews, incited by Chrestus, incessantly caused disturbances, he [Claudius] banished them" (25. 4). It is uncertain whether he was referring to Christ, or to a Roman Jew by the name of Chrestus. It may be that a Samaritan by the name of Thallus wrote in the first century. He ascribed the darkness at the crucifixion to an eclipse, which would show some knowledge of the life of Jesus. The most important Latin witness is Tacitus, who described in his *Annals* (A.D. 115) the persecution of the Christians under Nero. He wrote:

> This name comes to them from Christ, whom the Procurator Pontius Pilate, under the rule of Tiberius, had handed over to the torture. Repressed for the moment, this detestable superstition broke out anew, no longer simply in Judea, where the evil arose, but at Rome, into which there flows all that is horrible and shameful in the whole world, and finds many people to support it. (xv. 44.)

Meager as this is for the needs of a biographer, it shows that this author had no doubt that the life of Jesus was anchored in history.

2. Jewish Testimony About Jesus

The two important Jewish authors of the first century were Josephus and Philo of Alexandria. Since the latter died about A.D. 50 it is not strange that he made no mention of Jesus, for it is not certain that Christianity had reached Egypt by that time. But Josephus lived to the end of the century and wrote two great histories. In his *Antiquities of the Jews* (xviii. 3. 3) our manuscripts have an extended reference to Jesus. But since it gives expression to a full Christian faith, and since the earliest Christian Fathers who read Josephus do not mention the passage, it must unhesitatingly be pronounced a Christian interpolation. There is no agreement among scholars as to whether the interpolation was inserted into a passage which took a neutral attitude toward Jesus, or whether the Christian scribe suppressed some things which Josephus actually wrote. Later (xx. 9. 1) James is referred to as "the brother of Jesus." But the absence of important testimony about Jesus in Josephus is really not strange. He did not mention such an important Jewish teacher as Hillel. He certainly knew of Christianity, but nowhere did he make reference to it. His aim was to win favor for the Jews with the cultivated Roman classes. He had no desire to call attention to the fact that the despised sect of Christians had any connection with the Jewish people, whose history he sought to magnify for Roman readers.

There was no Palestinian Jewish literature contemporary with Jesus. It was not until A.D. 200 that the Mishnah was reduced to writing, and some centuries later the Gemara was completed in two recensions. Together these comprise what is known as the Talmud. Here are to be found some polemical references to Jesus. A modern Jewish scholar has summarized the early statements about Jesus in the Talmud as follows:

> There are reliable statements to the effect that his name was Yeshu'a (Yeshu) of Nazareth; that he "practised sorcery" (i.e. performed miracles, as was usual in those days) and beguiled and led Israel astray; that he mocked at the words of the Wise; that he expounded Scripture in the same manner as the Pharisees; that he had five disciples; that he said that he was not come to take away from the law or to add to it; that he was hanged (crucified) as a false teacher and beguiler on the eve of the Passover which happened on a Sabbath; and that his disciples healed the sick in his name. (Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth,* p. 46.)

It is clear that this contains no new source of information. It is simply a depreciation of the gospel evidence and is dependent upon it. But it is important to note that nowhere in the Talmud is any doubt raised as to the historicity of Jesus. The Jews rejected the Christian evaluation, not the fact that he had lived.

3. CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY TO JESUS

We are therefore really reduced to Christian witnesses. That is not strange. It could not have been otherwise. During his lifetime, Jesus did not achieve results which would attract the attention of any objective historian. Only for those who believed that he was God's Anointed was his name important. Hence, only through the group of Christian believers was any information preserved about his life. They saw Jesus through the eyes of faith, but no others who saw him wrote of him at all.

The earliest Christian writer was the apostle Paul, and he had not known Jesus in the flesh. It is clear from his letters that the risen, exalted Lord occupied the center of his faith. Only a few facts can be culled from them to illuminate the life of Jesus on earth. He was born of woman, of a Davidic family, and some of his brothers survived him. He had been a teacher, for some of his words are repeated. He celebrated a last meal with his disciples on the night in which he was betrayed. He was crucified and buried, and then raised by God from the dead on the third day. While it is true that this is a meager outline, Paul is one of our most important witnesses to the historicity of Jesus. In his polemical attacks upon certain other teachers who had enjoyed bodily contact with Jesus, Paul insisted that this did not rank them above himself. Obviously, it would be meaningless to argue the value of bodily association with someone who had been simply a mythical figure. But Paul shows clearly that mere biographical information about Jesus was not the central thing. Those who remembered Jesus did so because of their interpretation of him.

The rest of our Christian witnesses are in gospels. We must not think exclusively of the four which were ultimately received into the New Testament canon. These were selected from a much wider gospel literature. Some, as the Gospel to the Hebrews, were written for specific groups which were not on the main line of the development of the church. The Gospel of Peter dealt particularly with the passion. Other gospels spun out stories of the birth and infancy of Jesus, such as the Protevangelium, and the Gospels of James and of Thomas. But none of these adds anything significant to our historical information. When fragments of a hitherto unknown gospel were discovered a few years ago, their publication was awaited with interest. But they brought no real addition to our knowledge of Jesus. The sayings of Jesus found on a papyrus at Oxyrhynchus and the "agrapha" scattered through the ancient Fathers add at best variant phrasings of known words. When our canonical gospels were written, genuine tradition was practically exhausted, and already the tendency to embellish fact with legend was making itself felt.

4. The Preservation of Knowledge About Jesus

The sources for our knowledge of Jesus are therefore available to every reader of the English Bible. But that does not mean that he is able at once to understand the conditions under which the gospels were written. These little books have been studied more thoroughly than any other human writings. The literary problems which they present offer a field for a lifetime of study. We must condense into one short chapter a very brief summary of the results of this work. Reference should be made to larger books for the elaboration of the story and the defense of the positions which are taken here.

We have already noted the fact that Jesus wrote nothing. Neither, so far as we can learn, did any of his disciples during his lifetime. There was no Boswell to follow this Johnson and write down at the end of the day all of the clever things he had heard from his master. It was customary for the rabbinic teachers to have their pupils commit their teaching to memory. While it is possible that Jesus may occasionally have done the same, an examination of the tradition concerning such sayings as the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer does not bear out the hypothesis. As Jesus went about doing good, he scattered his words as a sower scatters his seed. Some fell on the good soil of a retentive mind and they were remembered later. Yet Jesus was not primarily a rabbi; he was a prophet and more than a prophet. He did not come to speak words to be memorized, but to awaken a great religious movement.

The crucifixion of Jesus did not cut short that awakening; it only diverted it into a different channel. The gospel which the disciples of Jesus preached after his resurrection centered in the redemptive acts of God. The apostles did not first of all proclaim biographical information about the sainted Master from whom they were separated. Their message concerned his messiahship and the deliverance which God was bringing through him. The focus of Christian interest was not primarily historical or biographical. It was in a religious conviction which centered in the person of Jesus. Christian faith was not a later addition to a historical tradition about a man who had been a noble teacher and instructive example. Traditions about Jesus were used to ground the Christian faith. In other words, the gospels present us with exactly the same situation as the letters of Paul. They were written to promote a faith, not to provide biographies of an interesting historical character.

Behind the earliest of our gospels lies a whole generation of preaching in which the tradition about Jesus was passed on by word of mouth. In this oral tradition, a certain amount of fixity was attained, and some parts may have been committed to writing. We are not to think, however, of the production of books, but the serving of the growing needs of the Christian communities. We are not to think of one or two eyewitnesses, though of course there were not a few who had memories of the life of Jesus. We are to think of a generation of Christian teachers using more or less standardized forms of tradition. This period of oral transmission was most important, though we cannot reconstruct every step without an element of conjecture. It was probably during this period that most of the tradition passed from the Aramaic language, in which Jesus and the first disciples had spoken, to the Greek language, which was the most important one for the developing church.

5. Classification of the Oral Tradition

The study of the oral tradition is usually called "form criticism." That is not the most happy term, for it selects for emphasis one aspect of the study, the casting of the material into more or less fixed forms. Forms were necessary if the tradition was to be preserved, but it would be wiser to speak of the study of the development of the oral tradition in its use by the early church. In the instruction of converts, in controversy with opponents, and in cult devotion, the stories and sayings of Jesus were formulated.

No connected narrative was called for in the preaching of the gospel message. The sayings and incidents were originally separate and therefore should be studied as separate units.

The one exception was the story of the passion. A connected account was early formulated of the incidents from the offer of Judas to betray Jesus to his burial in the grave of Joseph of Arimathea. It received later embellishment and modification, but there was clearly a consecutive version in the early tradition. It is just as apparent that there was no similar framework of the life of Jesus. Most of the incidents and stories were repeated without reference to time and place. They were not told as part of a biography, but as illustrations of what Jesus of Nazareth had done to warrant the Christian faith in him. Because of this situation it is impossible to write a life of Jesus. Books may bear that title, but it is a task which is impossible to fulfill because of the nature of our tradition. When Mark wrote his gospel, he did not know an exact sequence of events. He strung together his selection of the oral tradition for the one purpose of preaching the gospel message which centered in the death and resurrection of the Christ.

Several different classifications of the units of the tradition have been proposed. Personally, I prefer the one given by Dibelius, and it has the added advantage that these units are conveniently printed in his book, *The Message of Jesus Christ*. In addition to the preaching summaries, he makes five classifications of tradition.

(1) *The old stories or paradigms*. These are short incidents which culminate in a word of Jesus, which was useful in the preaching. Some are healing stories; some are controversial incidents. They are usually told with a minimum of detail, and were capable of general application. As a rule, neither the time nor the location figure. The story of the plucking of ears of corn on the sabbath (Mark 2:23-28) offers a good example of the type.

(2) *Parables*. These were the most distinctive of the teachings of Jesus and constitute a definite literary form. Most of them have been preserved independent of the original context. In the adaptation of these stories to the new problems of the Christian church, secondary expansions took place. These must be recognized if we are to recover the parables which Jesus spoke. But unquestionably

in the parables we find some of the most original of the teaching of Jesus.

(3) *Sayings.* These may be grouped under various topics and types. No long speeches of Jesus were remembered. The short, pithy sayings were collected under various devices for the assistance of the memory. Sometimes a common word joined different sayings, such as the word "light." Words about the Pharisees were collected together, or sayings about John the Baptist.

(4) *The great miracle tales.* Here the storyteller's art was developed in the direction of greater detail and delight in incident for its own sake. On the one hand, these were more secular in tone, and on the other hand, they emphasized the marvels which Jesus performed. As we read such a story as the stilling of the waves (Mark 4:35-41), we can see the early Christian teacher in competition with the wonder tales of other religious heroes.

(5) *Legends.* Here are brought together not only stories from the life of a holy man, but what I would rather describe as *epiphany stories*—that is, stories which bring out the divine significance of Jesus.

It should be remembered that this classification is according to type, and does not of itself carry with it any judgment about historicity. It is a mistake to suppose that one can pass directly from a classification according to literary form to a judgment on historical value. Form is only one of the factors to be taken into consideration.

It should never be forgotten that classification is simply a convenient device for facilitating understanding. Individual differences are not removed by classification of the traditions. Yet it is all important for the student to realize that in studying the tradition about Jesus we do not deal primarily with four books. We deal with literally scores of units of tradition, each of which must be studied by itself. The connecting framework from the later evangelists is much less important for the recovery of Jesus than the separate building stones out of which the gospels have been built. And these had a long history in oral use in the life of the church.

6. The Writing of the Synoptic Gospels

Before the composition of our earliest gospel, written collections were probably in circulation. It is almost certain that Matthew and Luke used a collection of the sayings of Jesus which is usually referred to as "Q." While we cannot reconstruct this document in detail, its general contents may be clear from a gospel synopsis. Agreements between Matthew and Luke are best explained through the use of such a written document. Some believe that Matthew used another early written collection of material which is referred to as "M," but the evidence for that is not nearly so conclusive. It is also held that Luke used an extensive document which is described as "L," but there is no proof that this was a document rather than a relatively common body of tradition. Also in Mark, a half-dozen sections may plausibly be referred to previous written documents. But the first to write a gospel was Mark.

I shall use the names Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to refer to the authors of our four gospels without prejudice to a final decision on the actual authorship. Reference must be made to the Introductions to the New Testament for a full treatment of these questions. Since we know so much more about the actual authors of the gospels than the men whose names later tradition assigned to them, this will be a useful device. Though each evangelist employed the common tradition of the various churches, each one stamped his own personality and interest upon his writing. Though they were editors and compilers rather than original authors, they made distinctive selections from the oral tradition.

According to the tradition of the early church, John Mark wrote his gospel after the death of Peter, whom he had served as interpreter. Though there are difficulties in ascribing our gospel to him, the tradition is probably to be accepted, and we may assign its writing to Rome about A.D. 70. In a graphic, colloquial narrative, he wove together the traditions to show the great deeds of the Son of God, whose messiahship had been a secret to the mass of men. For a church which had just passed through persecution, he stressed the need for suffering if one was to follow Christ. The cross was central in the gospel as in most early Christian preaching.

About a generation later, Matthew expanded Mark by adding collections of the teaching of Jesus. Mark had confined himself to the preaching message, and had not included much of the catechetical material for the moral training of converts. Matthew was eager to stress that Jesus had been the appointed Messiah for the Jews. To a church facing the peril of moral laxity, he brought the insistence upon righteousness. He presented Jesus as the new lawgiver. In addition to Mark, he used Q (the collection of sayings), and he also had access to some other bodies of material. Naturally under these circumstances, the author cannot be identified with one of the twelve disciples. It may be that Matthew, the publican, assembled some of the material used by our evangelists. The gospel was probably written near Antioch in north Syria.

About the same time, a gentile Christian composed a two-volume history of the beginnings of Christianity. As far as the first volume is concerned, he might well have been Luke, one of the companions of Paul. The difficulty with accepting that authorship lies with the second volume, the Acts of the Apostles. Luke also used Mark and Q; in addition to these he had access to a few good narratives, a collection of sayings, and some important parables. His gospel reveals a greater historical interest than any of the others. He connected his story with the secular history of the time. Also, he had higher literary ambitions and wrote in a more polished style. The common authorship of the third gospel and the Acts of the Apostles should be remembered, for the same characteristics run through the two books. There is no clear indication of the place of composition.

These three gospels are usually referred to as the synoptic gospels. That is because they may be printed side by side and viewed together. It is highly desirable to study them with the aid of such a synopsis. Only then can a student see at a glance how Matthew and Luke have modified the story which they copied from Mark, and how they vary in the wording of sayings which they drew from Q. A close study of these changes will make it clear that the evangelists exercised considerable freedom in their work. Verbal exactness was not the first requirement. They were seeking to present the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. They transcribed their sources in the spirit of interpreters.

7. The Nature of the Fourth Gospel

The Gospel according to John stands somewhat apart from the other three. Later church tradition ascribed it to one of the disciples of Jesus, but in the light of our modern knowledge that does not seem probable. However, it is much more important to understand the nature of the book than to come to agreement on the name of the author. He had access to many good ancient traditions. Some of them were the same as those incorporated into the synoptic gospels. In fact, the author may have used Mark and possibly Luke. But in addition to these he had access to other valuable traditions, the source of which it is useless to conjecture. This may have been John, the son of Zebedee, but that theory would not in any way alter their value.

While all of the evangelists were intent upon giving an interpretation of Jesus, "John" used his sources in a much freer way. Instead of reproducing collections of isolated sayings of Jesus, he developed a few of these into long speeches which portray the developed Christian faith of his time. The specific Palestinian Jewish content has been molded in terms of the interests of the wider Hellenistic world. The Johannine words of Jesus stand on a very different plane from the synoptic and are primarily usable for the author's interpretation of Christianity. They cannot be made the basis for a reconstruction of the message of Jesus. Much good tradition has been embodied in the Fourth Gospel, but on the whole it calls for separate treatment. It is in many ways the climactic presentation of the gospel, but it must be understood as that rather than as a presentation of historic events.

From one point of view, these four little books give us a very meager account of the career of Jesus. Would that we possessed many more of his words and many more incidents from his life! But from the standpoint of the gospel message they are quite adequate. They serve to show why the first Christians had such an exalted belief about him. To double our historical information would not necessarily increase the possibility of sharing their faith. Of course the historian desires much more information in order to give a more complete account of this career which was to mean so much in human history. But the gospels were not written for him; they were written that men might believe that Jesus was the Christ.

BIBLE READINGS

Luke 1:1-4.

Compare carefully: Mark 2:1-12; Matt. 9:1-8; Luke 5:17-26.
Matt. 3:7-10: Luke 3:7-9.
Mark 10:17-22; Matt. 19:16-22; Luke 18:18-23.
Matt. 11:25-27:Luke 10:21-22.

CHAPTER IV

JOHN THE BAPTIST

THE early Christians dated the beginning of their movement with the work of John the Baptist. Mark began his gospel with an account of the preaching of John. Luke did not offer a date for the opening of the ministry of Jesus. The fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar was the time when the word of God came to John. When the disciples came together after the resurrection, the qualifications laid down for a successor to Judas called for one who had been with them "beginning from the baptism of John." Matthew recorded the word of Jesus, "From the days of John the Baptist until now. . . . ." He marked a dividing line in history.

This John is better known to us in nonbiblical sources than Jesus. Josephus gave an extended reference to him in his *Antiquities of the Jews.*

> Herod had slain this good man, who commanded the Jews to practice virtue both in righteousness toward one another and in piety toward God, and also to come to baptism. For so would the washing be acceptable to him, not as a petition for forgiveness of certain sins, since the soul had already been purified by righteousness, but as a purification of the body. Now when others came together in crowds, for they were exceedingly pleased to hear his words, Herod feared that John's persuasive power over the people would lead to some revolt. (They seemed to do everything he advised.) Hence he thought it was better to put him to death and prevent any mischief he might cause. (xviii. 5. 2.)

When we compare this passage with the gospels, certain differences may be noted. But most of these are accounted for once we realize that Josephus was silent about the messianic hope and sought to present Jewish teachers in the terms of Greek philosophy. On the other hand, the Christian evangelists presented John from the standpoint of their movement.

I. The Message of John

John appeared as a prophet in the Judean wilderness about A.D. 27 or 28. An external stimulus may have been provided by the desecration of the Temple by the standards of Pilate's soldiers. The Jews believed that the spirit of prophecy had long been withdrawn, but here was a voice which spoke with inner certainty and divine urgency. For Mark it was a reminder of the words of Isaiah 40:3. The prophet of the exile had pictured the building of a miraculous road across the desert, over which the Lord would lead his people in their triumphant return to Jerusalem. Reading the Greek translation, Mark took it as a voice in the wilderness to prepare the way for the Lord. We read in Acts 21:38 of an Egyptian Jew who led his followers out into the wilderness. That was the traditional place for the appearance of messianic leaders.

This John did not live in a luxurious palace but followed the life of an ascetic far away from the populous cities. He practiced fasting and refused to join in the social life of men. He did not wear soft clothing, but his garments were made of leather and camel's hair. His food was locusts and the honey of wild bees. Strange as it may seem to us, locusts were an article of trade in the market place.

The heart of his message was the imminent judgment. Only Matthew added a word of the coming of the kingdom of heaven, but it is a mistake to try to separate these two ideas. While the judgment meant the end of this age, it was the beginning of the age to come. But John's emphasis was laid upon the coming wrath. The tree that did not bring forth good fruit would be cut down and burned with fire. The winnowing fork would cleanse the threshing floor; the wheat would be gathered in, but the chaff burned with unquenchable fire.

All Jews expected the coming of the judgment of God, but they trusted in the orthodox belief that all Israel would inherit the age to come. John held otherwise. No one should depend on the comforting assurance that he had Abraham for his father. God could raise up children to Abraham from the very stones. Belonging to the chosen people would save no one in the coming crisis. Only one thing would avail and that was repentance. After that, they must bring forth fruit worthy of that repentance. This was no new message. Repentance had always been highly valued in Israel. But John laid added stress upon it and made his demands specific. Those who had food and clothing must share with those who had none. Tax collectors must not practice extortion and soldiers must refrain from violence and be content with their wages. John did not require a change in occupation, but righteousness within their present vocation.

A second demand made by John was to accept baptism. Since he was preaching somewhere in the Jordan valley, this baptism probably meant self-immersion in the river. The washing was accompanied by a confession of sin. Josephus was undoubtedly in error in describing this baptism as a ritual purification. The Jews practiced many such washings, but they were to be repeated as often as people suffered defilement. John's baptism was an initiatory rite which had sacramental significance. That was why he warned away those who had not made a genuine repentance. Those who received baptism following the confession of their sins would be safe in the coming judgment and enter into the new age.

It is not clear why John chose this rite, though washings have always been used as symbols of religious purification. Ezekiel had written, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean" (36:25). There is evidence in later Christian Fathers that there were other baptizing sects east of the Jordan, though our information is too meager to know John's exact relation to them. The most probable source for John's usage is to be found in the practice of proselyte baptism. It is true that we do not have definite witness of this from pre-Christian times. Our earliest testimony is from the end of the first century. But it is very unlikely that Jews would have adopted this procedure after baptism had become an accepted rite in the Christian church. Male proselytes to Judaism were circumcised and received baptism; women were received on baptism. John adopted the practice with a significant difference. He did not agree that only the heathen needed purification for entrance into the people of God. Even children of Abraham needed the same rite of purification.

A final element in the message of John was the promise of the coming of a "mightier one." Naturally, the gospel writers assumed that this referred to Jesus. But a glance at John's description of this figure reveals the fact that it bore no resemblance to the Jesus of history. John spoke of a supernatural figure who would baptize with the fire of judgment. It is true that Mark has John predict the later Christian baptism with the Holy Spirit at the hand of this greater one. But this does not fit in with the rest of the characterization and is best explained as Christian adaptation. We shall return to the question as to whether John finally came to see in Jesus a fulfillment of his expectation. But certainly the words preserved in Q do not refer to a historical character. The one for whom John was unworthy to perform even the slave duty of loosening the thongs of his sandals was the bearer of the final judgment of God.

It is clear from both Josephus and the gospels that John attracted a very wide hearing. He exercised a profound influence on the people, who were apparently eager for his stirring message. The economic difficulties imposed by overpopulation and double taxation provided a fertile soil for messianic agitation. The Fourth Gospel pictures delegations of leaders going out from Jerusalem; Herod, the ruler over Perea, found him a dangerous disturber. A community of followers seems to have gathered about John. Those who received his baptism were taught prayers, practiced fasting, and may have formed separate religious groups. In communities as far away as Ephesus, and at a time as late as the third century, men looked to him. The Fourth Gospel seems to have as one of its polemical objectives to oppose the idea that John had been the Messiah. The stories about him which Luke included in his first chapter were probably preserved in these circles honoring John the Baptist.

2. The Baptism of Jesus

It is no wonder that word of this movement came to the village of Nazareth in Galilee and a devout carpenter by the name of Jesus was led to go to the Jordan valley to listen to this flaming prophet. It is no wonder that as he heard the stirring word of this man of God, he should present himself for baptism. Who could stand aloof when the prophet called men to do the will of God? We are tempted to speculate on the significance of this dedication on the part of Jesus. Our gospel accounts, however, were not written from the standpoint of biographies of Jesus, but from the standpoint of Christian faith.

Mark saw in his baptism the time when the Spirit of God rested upon Jesus just as in Christian baptism. It was also the moment when he became conscious of the fact that he was the Son of God. Mark presented this through the familiar Jewish device of a *bath kol,* or "voice from heaven." The words combined the expression of God's pleasure in his servant, as given in Isaiah (42:1), with an address to the king as God's son in a throne-ascension Psalm. In other words, baptism marked the divine choice of Jesus as the Servant-King. The symbol of the Spirit was found in a dove, of which there is no adequate explanation.

Luke added the fact that Jesus was praying at this time; this is a characteristic touch of his gospel which occurs over and over again. He also showed that the baptism of Jesus was something which he wanted to pass over quickly; he threw the event into a subordinate clause. In some of the early manuscripts of Luke the voice from heaven is an exact quotation of Psalm 2:7, ending with the words, "Today have I begotten you." This made clearer that the divine sonship began at baptism.

It is Matthew who reveals the embarrassment of the early church most clearly. The Christians were uniformly of the belief that Jesus had been sinless. Why then should he have presented himself at a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins? To guard against misunderstanding, Matthew inserted a conversation between Jesus and John in which Jesus met the protests of John by insistence that it was necessary in order to fulfill all righteousness. Ignatius, writing a little later, added the explanation that it was to purify the water. Matthew made another important alteration when he changed the heavenly voice from a word to Jesus himself into a message about Jesus. Jesus was pointed out to John and the others as the beloved Son in whom God was well pleased.

The development of Christian tradition was completed in the Fourth Gospel, where the voice from heaven is referred to but the baptism of Jesus is omitted altogether. The Christ of the Fourth Gospel was not one who could come to a baptism at human hands. Such a sacrament could mean nothing to him who had an eternal consciousness of divine mission.

There is, however, no reason why any modern Christian should be troubled by the fact that Jesus came to the baptism of John. If he had no sins of which to repent, he would still desire to dedicate himself to the kingdom of God. When John called upon his hearers to get ready for the judgment and the new age, Jesus could not have stood aside in aloofness. We must wait for our study of the career of Jesus before we make any attempt to evaluate the interpretation of the baptism which was given in the Markan tradition. But it is clear that before entering upon any public religious ministry, Jesus was drawn to the prophetic leadership of John the Baptist, and that he accepted baptism at his hand.

3. Synoptic Tradition About John

We have no means of knowing how long Jesus remained with John the Baptist. Mark wrote that Jesus was led away at once into the wilderness where he was tempted by the devil. The Fourth Gospel says nothing of a period of temptation, any more than of the baptism of Jesus. This evangelist did present Jesus and John in friendly rivalry as teachers working in the Jordan valley. Mark had stated that Jesus first began his ministry in Galilee after John had been delivered up. It may well be, however, that the Fourth Gospel correctly preserves the memory of an earlier period when Jesus was teaching independently beside John in Perea.

The gospel tradition makes clear the very high regard which Jesus had for John. John was the dividing line between the law and the prophets and the kingdom of God. There was none greater born of woman than John the Baptist. When the leaders at Jerusalem later challenged his authority, the reply of Jesus was in the form of a question about the authority of John (Mark 11:30). It is clear that Jesus agreed with the mass of the people that John had been sent from God. His own work carried on what his great predecessor had begun.

Did Jesus characterize the significance of John more definitely? According to Matthew he spoke of John as the Elijah who should come first to restore all things. But he is the only evangelist who made that identification specific. Mark simply wrote that Elijah had come, without saying who it had been. Both he and Q quote the passage from Malachi about the coming of a messenger to prepare the way for the Lord. They applied it to John the Baptist. The figure in Malachi was a "messenger of the covenant" who would purify the Temple. Later Jewish tradition identified this with Elijah, but the traditions about the coming of Elijah were too varied for us to be sure about the position of Jesus on this point. Nevertheless, it is possible that Jesus pointed to John the Baptist whenever the need for a forerunner to the Messiah was pointed out. The spirit of Elijah had returned in John.

It is even less clear what John thought of Jesus, for the historian must strip away the later apologetic Christian traditions if he is to reach the facts. We have already seen that the conversation at the baptism of Jesus was due to Matthew's modification of his source. The Fourth Gospel made John the Baptist insist that he did not know Jesus until that time. According to Q, John sent from prison to ask Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" When this is read following Matthew's version of the baptism of Jesus, it is natural to understand it as the beginning of doubt in the mind of John. He was discouraged by what Jesus had thus far done. But once we understand the secondary character of Matthew's account of the baptism, it becomes clear that the reverse is true. When John heard about the works of Jesus, he sent to inquire if he might be the "coming one." Interest and hope were growing in his mind. Might it be that instead of the terrible messenger of judgment, this healer and teacher was the expected messenger of God? No statement has been preserved of John's reaction to the reply of Jesus. Possibly it was not known to the early Christians. We cannot pierce the fastness of his prison walls to extract the secret of his final attitude toward Jesus.

Mark inserted an account of the death of John the Baptist to fill in the time while the disciples of Jesus were on their missionary tour. It is a picturesque story of how Herodias took her revenge on the prophet who had been bold enough to criticize her illegal marriage to the tetrarch of Galilee. When the daughter of Herodias pleased Herod's guests at a birthday party by her dancing, she was promised anything that she might ask. Her mother prompted her to demand the head of John on a platter. Herod had no desire to kill the holy man, but because of his pledged word felt that he had no choice. The head was delivered at once, and the disciples of John sorrowfully buried their master's body. Historians are compelled to point out that Mark was mistaken in the name of the former husband of Herodias; that Salome was at this time the wife of Philip; that princesses did not dance at banquets in the ancient orient; and that, according to Josephus, John was imprisoned at Macherus, near the Dead Sea, and many miles distant from the palace in Tiberias. Clearly, we have to do here with a popular legend. Josephus painted Herod as eager to kill John because of the danger of insurrection; but the people looked upon his defeat in war as a divine punishment for this judicial murder.

4. THE RELATION OF JESUS TO JOHN

The Christian tradition was much less concerned with factual information about John the Baptist than it was in showing how John's work was related to that of Jesus. Increasingly the emphasis was placed on the subordination of John to Jesus. Matthew made John insist that he should receive baptism from Jesus. Luke preserved for us stories of the birth of John which apparently circulated in Baptist circles. He related them, however, to the stories of the birth of Jesus in a way to emphasize the subordination of John. Though Elizabeth conceived six months earlier than her kinswoman Mary, already in the womb the true relationship between the two children was revealed. When the birth of Jesus was set on December 25, it meant that the birthday of John came on June 24. In other words, Jesus was born with the rising of the sun in the heavens, John with the setting of the sun.

These stories of the birth of John reveal the devout spirit of the group which preserved them. While Zechariah was performing his priestly service at the altar of incense, an angel appeared to him promising the birth of a son. He would be great in the sight of the Lord and filled with the Holy Spirit from the time of his conception. He would live the life of a Nazarite, and prepare the people of the Lord. Because of his protest that Elizabeth was too old to have children, Zechariah was struck dumb. But just as Samuel had been born to the barren Hannah, Elizabeth gave birth to John in due course of time. When speech was restored to the father he burst out into a psalm praising God who had raised up a "horn of salvation" for them.

The Fourth Gospel shows the climax of the Christian subordination of John to Jesus. Here he has no other importance than to bear witness to the light which had come in Jesus. John denied that he was Elijah or any other expected figure. He was only a voice, pointing men to the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. The only purpose of his baptism was that Jesus might be disclosed to Israel. He himself was the friend of the bridegroom who rejoiced when the bride (Israel) was led to the bridegroom (Christ). From now on, Jesus must increase; John must decrease. These are beautiful words of self-renunciation, but they clearly arise out of the conception of the Fourth Gospel of the relation of John to Jesus. The tremendous prophet of righteousness, baptizing men in view of the imminent judgment and the coming of the new age, has completely disappeared. In his place is one who had no other purpose than to point to Jesus in the words of a developed Christian theology.

Yet there was historic justification for these later Christian interpretations of the work of John. Except for the work of Jesus and the church which followed him, John's efforts would have gradually disappeared. None of the other movements which looked to him were to have a permanent future. It is probably true that for John Jesus was only one of those attracted to his baptism. At best, he looked to Jesus with some hopefulness as he languished in prison. But the results of history frequently go far beyond the expectations or intentions of men. In fact, the ultimate fruitfulness of John's work lay in this Galilean carpenter who received the human stimulus to begin his ministry through his work. Seen through the eyes of Christian development, John was the forerunner of Jesus. And, with all of their insistence upon the subordination of John, the first Christian preachers never forgot that their movement began with the baptism of John.

BIBLE READINGS

1. The Message of John: Mark 1:2-8; Matt. 3:1-12; Luke 3:3-20.
2. The Baptism of Jesus: Mark 1:9-11; Matt. 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22.
3. Synoptic Tradition About John: Matt. 11:2-19; 17:10-13; Luke 7:18-35; Mark 6:14-29.
4. The Relation of Jesus to John: Luke 1:5-25, 36-45, 57-80; John 1:19-34; 3:22-30.

CHAPTER V

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE SIGNS OF ITS COMING

Jesus is the Greek form of the name Jeshua or Joshua. It was a common name in Jewish history and in first-century Palestine. It is only because of a particular Jesus of Nazareth that it has become a name apart from all other names. He was brought up in a large family, for during his ministry at least six brothers and sisters were living (Mark 6:3). His mother Mary appears in the tradition, but Joseph, the father of the family, was apparently dead (Mark 3: 31 f.). It may be that provision for the support of the family had been a responsibility of Jesus for some years.

The one anecdote that was reported from his boyhood indicates that he was brought up in a devout family which reverenced the Torah of God (Luke 2:41-52). Certainly his teachings indicate that Jesus had been immersed in the Scriptures from his earliest boyhood. Other religious books which were popular in Galilee, such as Enoch and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, may have been known to him. If there was a synagogue school, we may be sure that Jesus attended it. But he was not one of the trained scribes. The religious leaders always looked upon him as a layman.

His occupation was that of a carpenter; this meant a builder or woodworker, though we must remember that Palestinian houses were not made of wood. Through this handicraft and his keen observation of life most of his education must have come. From his parables and sayings an interesting picture can be drawn of the things which impressed his boyhood and young manhood. He knew the importance of a good foundation in the building of a house; but he also knew the life of the sower who went out to sow, and the worker in the vineyard; he was familiar too with fishing and trading. He had observed the children playing in the market place, and also the idlers waiting for someone to hire them. And he had watched the ravens and sparrows and admired the wild anemones. His life was largely spent among the lowly. He knew the inside of a one-room peasant's hut, where a woman lights a lamp to search for a lost coin, much better than the houses where rich men fared sumptuously. Job had owned innumerable sheep and cattle; Jesus' friends were among those who counted their sheep each night to make sure that none was missing.

After the imprisonment of John, Jesus abandoned his trade and devoted himself to preaching and healing. Luke says that he was about thirty years of age when he began his ministry (3:23). John would indicate a considerably older age, for he records the words to Jesus, "You are not yet fifty" (8:57). Since Jesus was born before 4 B.C. and did not begin his ministry until A.D. 28-29, Luke's estimate is clearly too low. Evidently exact knowledge on this point was not preserved in the early church.

Jesus did not begin his work in his own home village but in Capernaum and the other towns surrounding the Sea of Galilee. This beautiful lake was the setting for many of the events of his ministry, and he crossed it numerous times. Rolling hills surround its blue waters. These are the "mountains" to which he was accustomed to retire. In spring they are covered with green, but in summer all nature withered. Today the region is almost deserted, but then it was teeming with villages. Here men first heard his stirring proclamation, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand."

The teaching of Jesus revolved about two foci, the two poles of the Jewish faith which he had inherited. They were the *reign of God* and the *will of God*. God was the center which united them both, and in the soul of Jesus they were fused in one supreme religious devotion. In this chapter we shall bring together the main teaching about the kingdom of God. In the next chapter we shall see his attitude toward the Torah, and his own exposition of the wisdom of life. We shall then summarize on the basis of these his message about God. In a further chapter we shall trace the outline of his ministry and the relation of his own person to the message which he delivered and the work which he performed.

In the eyes of all, Jesus was a prophet of the kingdom and a teacher of wisdom. But to some, he was God's anointed Messiah. We turn first to an exposition of Jesus' message of the kingdom.

I. Inherited Conceptions of the Kingdom

The kingdom of God was no new idea in Judaism, for belief in the kingship of God had long been central in Jewish faith. The phrase was not used so much to describe a locality as the kingly rule of God over all of life. Matthew customarily replaced it with "the kingdom of heaven." This was not a different conception; in this phrase he was following the Jewish custom of avoiding the use of the divine name. He did not mean a kingdom in heaven, but heaven was used in metonymy for God. When the prodigal son said, "I have sinned against heaven,' he was not referring to a place but to God. So, too, the kingdom of heaven meant the kingly rule of God on earth as it was in heaven.

The kingship of God had been conceived by the Jews in three different ways. First, God as the Creator was king in the world which he had made. He was eternally king. But that kingship had been broken by man's sin and now was confined to the heavenly world. Though Israel was the chosen people, God's rule had been taken away from her, and she was subject to the heathen powers because of her sin. But the righteous man who obeyed the Torah of God thereby took upon himself the yoke of the kingdom. In other words, the kingship of God was present, secondly, in the lives of those who did his will.

But in the third place the Jews looked forward to the time when God's rule would be complete over all of the earth. We have seen in Chapter II how differently this was conceived by various generations and groups. Some thought of a political triumph over the heathen nations after which God would rule through his Messiah in Jerusalem. Others thought of a more spiritual age, introduced by the judgment and the resurrection of the dead, when by the act of God his reign would be established over the world. The future consummation of God's kingdom coalesces with the messianic hope of the Jewish people. Some believed that men might force the hand of God if Israel would only repent and keep one sabbath perfectly. In the eyes of others, the great overturning depended entirely upon God; he alone could send his reign.

2. The Nearness of God's Reign

Jesus undoubtedly believed in all three of these aspects of the reign of God. He certainly believed in God's eternal kingship. He undoubtedly held that God ruled in the hearts of the devout who trusted in him; and we shall discover that he laid one of his most important emphases on the presence of God's rule in his own work. But his first and challenging proclamation was that the long-awaited consummation of the reign of God was at hand.

Mark summarized his opening message in the words, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." Jesus did not describe this, for every Jew knew what it meant. Certain aspects of God's rule might be illustrated by parables. It might be symbolized by a meal where they would recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But Jesus did not need to tell his hearers what the kingdom of God was. His message was that *it was near*. There were those standing in their midst who would not taste of death until it came with power. That would bring the judgment when they would either enter the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world or be rejected. This message was on his lips until his last supper, when he promised reunion with his disciples in the kingdom of God.

The genuine teaching of Jesus is singularly free from the painting of apocalyptic signs which would chart the timetable of God in the coming of the new age. Likewise, Jesus did not indulge in any fantastic descriptions of the fruitfulness and the glories of that time. When Pharisees asked about the signs of its coming, he insisted that the kingdom of God was not heralded by outward symptoms. There would be no more warning than in the judgments of old. In the days of Noah, that sinful generation had no special warning until the time came when Noah went into the ark and the flood came. In the days of Lot, Sodom and Gomorrah were given no sign of the coming end; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom, fire and brimstone rained down from heaven. So will be the coming of the Son of man. "Lo, the kingdom of God is [suddenly] in your midst" (Luke 17:21).

The note of *extreme urgency* runs through all of the teaching of Jesus. He had come to cast fire upon the earth, and to bring division even among the closest relatives. The men of that generation might be able to predict the morrow's weather, but they could not read the signs of the times. If they had been able to do so, they would have repented without delay. Just as it was prudent for a man to get right with his neighbor before he faced a human judge, men must get ready for the divine judgment which was so close at hand. No one should think that he was more righteous than the eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, or the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. In the coming judgment all would perish unless they repented. Now they had one more chance, just a little time of respite. They should strive to enter the narrow gate, for soon the door would be shut. The divine patience was like the conduct of the owner of a fig tree who will give it one more year to bear fruit. If then it fails to be fruitful, it should be cut down.

This urgency of the times culminated in his *call to repentance.* It was an evil and adulterous generation which sought after a sign. The only sign which would be given would be the sign of the prophet Jonah. As Jonah had been a prophet to the Ninevites, so was he to this generation. Nineveh had had no warning of the coming judgment except an earnest summons to repentance. So it was with this generation. The prophetic summons of Jesus was the only warning they would receive. If they did not repent, their doom was at hand.

Hence his message included woes upon the impenitent. They rested upon certain groups of people. "Alas for you rich! Alas for you scribes and Pharisees!" They would not enter God's kingdom, for they had failed to repent. The woes fell on certain cities. "Alas for you Chorazin and Bethsaida!" If the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon that were done in you, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes. It would be more tolerable for them in the judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum—where the chief ministry of Jesus had been carried on—wilt thou be lifted up to heaven? Thou shalt be brought down to Gehenna.

3. The Demand and the Gift

This call to repentance can be understood completely only in connection with Jesus' teaching about the will of God, to which we shall come in the next chapter. But here we should note how he emphasized over and over again that entrance to the kingdom of God must be *the supreme object of man's striving*. It was better to sacrifice an eye or a hand and enter the kingdom, than to go into the Gehenna of fire. Some would even become eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom. Since the rich could enter only by a miracle, the wise course was to give away one's possessions. A man must be ready even to hate his own father and mother and closest relatives, for no human tie should stand between anyone and entrance to God's kingdom. The cost was great and must be calculated, just as when a man is building a tower or a king going to war. But he who did not renounce all that he had could not be his disciple. He who put his hand to the plow and looked back was not fit for the kingdom of God.

Over and over again Jesus presented his summons for men to seek first the kingdom of God. It was not enough to say "Lord, Lord." They must be willing to pay any price for the supreme good, entrance to the kingdom of God. Just as a pearl fancier would make any sacrifice for a fine specimen, just as anyone would sell all that he had to buy a field in which lay a great treasure, so entrance into the kingdom was worth any sacrifice a person might be called upon to make. It may be that Jesus had such individuals in mind when he spoke of the violent who were taking the kingdom by storm.

But this was only one side of the teaching of Jesus. Just as he never thought of the kingdom as something that man might *build,* he never thought of the kingdom as something which man might *earn* by the righteousness which he had achieved. Entrance to the kingdom of God was in the last analysis *a gift of God*. "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Who would enter the kingdom of God? In his answer to that question Jesus made a complete overturning of many of the accepted ideas of his time. Some of the most characteristic expressions on this point are to be found in the beatitudes. These are not timeless descriptions of Christian character. They are paradoxical promises of the kingdom to certain groups of people. It was not for the rich and proud; it was for the poor and the humble. It was not for those who profited by the injustices of the present age; it was for those who mourned over their sins and the sins of the nation.

Nothing was more revolutionary in the teaching of Jesus than his description of *those who would enter the kingdom of God.* He did not agree that riches were a sign of God's favor. "How hardly shall they who possess riches enter the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Men should sell their possessions and give them away; take heed and beware of covetousness. Written large in the gospels is the insistence, "You can't take it with you." There stand those words so incomprehensible to a materialistic civilization, "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."

Among a people who exalted learning in the Torah, Jesus did not promise entrance to the wise scribes. Instead, he took a little child, and laying his hands upon him said, "Of such is the kingdom of God." Only by becoming as receptive as the little child could anyone enter God's kingdom. It was not for the proud and the self-sufficient, but for those who recognized their need in humble dependence.

If the kingdom was not for the *rich* nor the *wise,* neither was it for the *good.* The good might hope to earn it by their virtue, but the only door of entrance was that of contrite repentance. In practice, this was more difficult for the devout Pharisee, who prided himself on his righteousness, than it was for the tax collectors and harlots, who could have no illusions about their goodness. The latter would enter the kingdom ahead of the Pharisees.

Finally, Jesus did not even look upon it as a Jewish prerogative. "They will come from the East and the West, and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into outer darkness."

4. Victory Over the Kingdom of Evil

Thus far we have seen how Jesus announced the coming of a crisis which would cut short the present age and introduce the coming age, the kingdom of God. We have seen how the preparation for entrance did not depend upon wealth, or learning, or nationality, or other outward factors, but upon a genuinely inward preparation. In that sense it might be said that "the kingdom of

God is within you." But that did not exclude the expectation of the coming of the outward event. Alongside of these passages, however, are others which point to the fact that in a sense *this kingdom was already present.* This belief is summed up in the word, "Blessed are the eyes which see what you see; for I tell you, Many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it; and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it." This was because the defeat of evil was already in process. "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven." There was a sense in which the expected day of deliverance was already there.

In the first place, the kingdom of God was manifest in the demon exorcisms which occupied such a prominent place in the ministry of Jesus. Two explanations of sickness were prevalent in the time of Jesus. According to one, sickness was a punishment for sin. Jesus seems to have definitely rejected that theory; at least, misfortune was not a proof of greater sinfulness, and the forgiveness of sin was not impossible for one who was sick. The other theory was that sickness was due to possession by demons. The later Judaism had a highly developed demonology. It was a kingdom organized under the prince of demons. "Possession" by demons was pictured as realistically as the occupancy of a house by individuals. These demonic powers could condemn the soul through enticement to sin and weaken the body by causing illness. Many of the maladies ascribed to demons were what we would call mental disease. The prevalence in the gospel stories of those possessed by evil spirits suggests the possibility that the messianic excitement awakened by John the Baptist sometimes contributed to mental disorder.

It appears that Jesus subscribed to the belief that at least much human illness was due to demonic possession. Those who hold that this was only an accommodation to contemporary ideas threaten the genuineness of the humanity of Jesus. While we connect belief in possession by evil spirits with a prescientific, animistic age, it grasped an important truth. Jesus could adopt this view because it expressed the conviction that ill-health was not something deliberately sent by God, but *came from forces seeking to thwart his will.* A victory over disease was a victory over the God-opposing powers. The expulsion of demons was an evidence of the power of God.

Mark presents the ministry of Jesus in terms of a conquest of these demonic forces. In his very first appearance in a synagogue in Capernaum, Jesus drove out an evil spirit. Frequently Mark pictures conversations between Jesus and the demons. They alone recognized the divine Son of God, who was their triumphant conqueror. Mark tells one story in which the demons ask to be transferred to a herd of swine. In another incident, demon possession is linked with epilepsy. In still another case we read of the healing of a dumb demoniac. Many stories are not related in detail, but the evangelist contented himself with general summaries of the casting out of evil spirits. Luke refers to the casting out of seven demons from Mary of Magdala, and extends this work of exorcism to the disciples of Jesus. Clearly, one of the most vivid memories of the ministry of Jesus was of these demon exorcisms. It is striking that while incidents of the healing of the sick are so numerous, the synoptic tradition knows only a very few stories which deal exclusively with the conversion of the notoriously sinful. Any interpretation which would minimize the healing ministry of Jesus is not true to the point of view of the gospels.

The opponents of Jesus, described as Pharisees, did not deny the demon exorcisms. They ascribed them rather to satanic influence. "It is by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that he casts out demons." The reply of Jesus is recorded in our two earliest sources. Mark has Jesus reply that this charge would mean that there was civil war in the kingdom of Satan. If that were the case, his power was broken, for no kingdom divided against itself can stand. But the premise of the Pharisees was false. No man's house can be despoiled unless the owner is first overwhelmed and rendered powerless. Since the kingdom of Satan is being despoiled in the exorcism of demons, it is evidence of the downfall of the head of that kingdom. The Q source adds another important word: "If I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you." In other words, the dawning presence of the kingdom of God is already found in the beneficent ministry of Jesus, especially as he drives out these evil spirits which bring disease and mental disorder.

5. The Signs of the Presence of the Kingdom

There is another important word in Q which extends this interpretation to all of his healing ministry. In response to the inquiry of the disciples of John as to whether Jesus was the coming one, he replied in terms of a poetic summary of various passages in the book of Isaiah which celebrated the time of God's salvation. These predictions were already taking place. The evidences of God's victory were already to be seen. Both Matthew and Luke have arranged their gospels so that examples of most of these signs had already been given. They wished to show that the kingdom of God had come upon them, if men only had eyes to see.

"The blind receive their sight." Mark related two stories. One was of a blind beggar in Jericho by the name of Bartimaeus, one of the few incidents where name and place are given. This was a healing by the word of Jesus and the faith of the man healed. These are the media for healing in the earliest and best stories. Mark's other illustration is influenced by popular thaumaturgic technique. In this story Jesus first anoints the eyes of the blind man with spittle; a second treatment is needed before the man sees clearly. It is quite evident that the incident is given a symbolic application. Mark located the story just before Peter's confession—when the eyes of the disciples were finally open to the Messiah. Matthew shows his constant tendency to exaggerate the healings by introducing two blind men in each of his illustrations. Elsewhere he changes "many" to "all"; he would not leave the suggestion that Jesus ever failed.

"The lame walk." Though Peter healed a lame man, according to the book of Acts, there is no example in the Galilean ministry of Jesus. The nearest is to be found in the case of the healing of the paralytic who was let down through the roof by the four men who brought him to Jesus. This was again a healing by faith and the word of Jesus. Possibly Matthew had in mind the absence of illustrations on this point when he added the healing of the lame in the Temple at Jerusalem.

"The lepers are cleansed." We must remember that this was a skin disease which was looked upon as curable, and probably not identical with what we know as leprosy. Not only are there prescriptions in the Old Testament for the restoration of healed

lepers to normal society; these received elaborate commentary in the Talmud. Mark knew the story of the cleansing of one leper by the word and touch of Jesus. Luke added a story of the healing of ten lepers. This had the further motif of gratitude, and Luke was pleased to emphasize that it was a despised Samaritan who had been grateful. It would hardly be fair, however, to condemn the other nine, for if they obeyed the command of Jesus, to show themselves to a priest and offer their sacrifice, they would naturally be on their way to Jerusalem.

"The deaf hear." Deafness is usually joined to dumbness, and such is the case in the gospel stories. In addition to a dumb demoniac whose healing was reported by Matthew, we read in Mark of a deaf man with an impediment in his speech. Here again the techniques of the popular healer are described. Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears, and placed spittle on his tongue, and pronounced the magic word, as the Aramaic would sound in the ears of Greek-speaking people.

"The dead are raised." Mark's story concerned the raising of the daughter of Jairus, one of the rulers of a synagogue. It is told at great length, culminating in the Aramaic formula at which the child rises. The story ends with Mark's customary charge to tell no one. The evangelist did not mean to say that Jesus had been able to observe that life was still present after the neighbors had mistakenly supposed that she was dead. The raising of the dead belonged to the messianic time, and Mark had no doubt that Jesus had performed it. Luke added another story of the raising of a widow's son at Nain, and emphasized that it was the only daughter of Jairus. This was the motif in the similar Old Testament stories. Both Elijah and Elisha had raised from the dead the only sons of stricken parents. The Christian tradition could report nothing less of Jesus.

6. A Gospel of Health

There were other healing stories which do not fall within the pattern of this description of the wonderful works of Jesus. Mark told of the healing of a man with a paralyzed hand and of a woman with a serious hemorrhage. Luke described the healing of a man with dropsy. Sometimes the descriptions are so vague that it is impossible to judge the exact nature of the disease. We are told that Peter's mother-in-law was cured of a fever, but that does not tell us what had caused the fever. We cannot judge the possibility of curing instantly a woman who had suffered from an infirmity for eighteen years without a fuller description of the nature of the infirmity.

When we read of the instantaneous healing of crowds of people, we wonder if there was any check on the permanence of all of these cures? The evangelists recorded a saying of Jesus about the demon who returned to the house from which he had been driven out; finding it empty, he brought back a host of spirits more evil than himself. Perhaps we may conjecture from this that all cures were not permanent, and Jesus had to guard men against a recurrence of their maladies.

But when all due allowance is made for later exaggerations, for the influence of Old Testament prophecies, for incomplete diagnoses, and fragmentary information on the history of patients, it is undeniable that Jesus carried on a significant healing ministry. Amid the filth and lack of sanitation in the ancient Orient, where there was no knowledge of scientific medicine, sickness must have been more prevalent than in modern civilizations. Faced with this need, the compassion of Jesus led him to bring all possible healing to their bodies and minds. The will of God was not the saving of disembodied souls, but the healing of the entire personality.

The early Christians, however, did not offer the evidence of the healing ministry of Jesus as proof of his divinity. That would have been utterly illogical, for they believed that the working of such signs continued among themselves. Peter and Paul healed the sick and raised the dead. The working of such miracles was one of the gifts of the Spirit, not a proof of the divinity of the bearer of the gift. Jesus and the early church laid the emphasis elsewhere. The healings which emanated from the power of Jesus were *the signs that the kingdom of God was already in some sense present*. It was not simply a consummation in the near future. It was so near that its benefits were already being partially enjoyed. Long before the sun appears above the horizon, its light dawns on the earth; likewise the signs of the presence of God's rule were already to be found in their midst.

7. The Good News of God

"The poor have the gospel preached to them." The good news of the gospel was that God's reign was at hand. The signs of its presence were not a substitute for the final overthrow of the kingdom of evil. Rather, the complete triumph of the reign of God was near. Its coming was not man's task. Man could and should pray for its coming, but no number of human good works would complete the triumph over evil. Jesus never said, as some modern teachers, "Repent, and if enough of us do, we can build the kingdom of God." Nowhere in the gospels are men exhorted to work for the kingdom of God, or to build the kingdom of God. It was God's kingdom, and only he could send it. Man could at best enter that kingdom when God sends it.

The parables with which Jesus described the kingdom of God are not parables of building but of growth. From that, some modern students, brought up on ideas of evolution, have thought of the kingdom as a slow evolutionary development. But that was not the emphasis of Jesus. In no case is the process with which Jesus compared the kingdom a slow one. The action of yeast in leavening a lump of dough hardly suggests development through a period of years. Of course there was a development in the spread of the message about the kingdom, and in the extension of these signs of the preliminary presence of the kingdom. But that development would soon be cut short by the expected catastrophe of the judgment and the introduction of the new age. The point of these parables lies in the contrast between the small beginnings in the little yeast and the small mustard seed, and the great endings in the three measures of meal and the great tree. These do not come from man's activity, but through the power of God.

The greatest of the parables through which Jesus described the kingdom of God is the parable of the self-growing seed. The kingdom of God is like the situation where a man planted a seed in the ground. While he slept, the earth brought forth fruit of itself until the harvest came. The point of comparison does not lie in the tracing of the successive steps of growth—the blade, the ear, and the full grain in the ear. There is no crop until the wheat is ripe. Throughout the Bible, the harvest is a standing figure for the judgment. The point of the parable is that the kingdom is from God just as truly as every harvest of grain. It was not man's effort that made the seed grow; it grew of itself. It is not man's effort that "builds" the kingdom; the reign of God is something which God alone can send.

8. A Kingdom Which God Must Send

It has not been easy for the modern church in America to accept this as the message of Jesus. It seems so far removed from our activistic emphasis. It may not be out of place, therefore, to add to this chapter a few words on the permanent significance of this message, which Jesus cast in the eschatological forms of his time. We must never forget that the kingdom of God is not a human Utopia. It is the complete rule of the holy and eternal God. It is not a better society; it is a perfect society. That is never here; it is always coming. If men could ever say, "The kingly rule of God is complete," with the new crop of babies born the next day the process of leading all life into full acceptance of the perfect will of God would begin over again.

The kingship of God is never complete this side of the judgment and the resurrection. The New Testament hope of the kingdom of God involved nothing less than that. Our hope that this kingdom will come rests wholly upon our faith that God is the final arbiter of history. But a more modest hope depends upon that same faith. Belief in a better day for humanity cannot be based on trust in the cleverness of man. It rests on our conviction that the ultimate environment of man is not hostile to our dreams of human brotherhood but is friendly toward them. The possibility of a better world rests upon the ultimate structure of reality, just as truly as the resurrection of individuals to a new life depends upon the faithfulness of God to his creation.

Jesus spoke out of the foreshortened perspective of the man of the first century. We live in an age when men look forward to an endless extension of human history. But this difference should not keep us from seeing that it is God who must send his reign. We do not believe that God is so separated from his children that he cannot send more of his rule through and in us. This world is not orphaned and forsaken. As Jesus saw signs of the coming kingdom of God in his own ministry, we too should expect signs of its coming in works of mercy and the spread of an order of justice.

But, after all, these remain relative and partial. The kingdom of God in its fullness is absolute and ultimate. It is the goal and meaning of history though in a real sense it lies beyond history, just as Jesus taught. But that ultimate world impinges upon us now, and calls us to a repentance whose standard is not the relativities of history but the will of the eternal God. Jesus did not propound a theory about a coming world. He called upon men to live now according to the kingdom of God which was so near. And this leads us directly to the attitude which Jesus took toward the Torah, or law of the Jews.

BIBLE READINGS

2. The Nearness of God's Reign: Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; 14:25; Luke 6:24-26; 10:13-15; 17:20-37; 12:49–13:9.
3. The Demand and the Gift: Luke 14:25-35; Mark 9:43-48; Matt. 19:12; 13:44-46; Luke 12:32; 6:20-23; Matt. 8:11-12; Mark 10:13-31; Luke 13:23-24.
4. Victory Over the Kingdom of Evil: Luke 10:18, 23-24; 11:15-22; Mark 1:23-28; 5:1-20; 9:14-29; 3:23-27; Matt. 9:32-34; 12:43-45.
5. The Signs of the Presence of the Kingdom: Mark 1:40-45; 2:1-12; 5:21-43; 7:31-37; 8:22-26; 10:46-52; Luke 7:11-17; 17:11-19; Matt. 21:14.
6. The Gospel of Health: Mark 1:29-34; 3:1-12; Luke 13:10-17; 14:1-6; 11:24-26.
7. The Good News of God: Mark 4:26-32; Luke 13:18-21.

CHAPTER VI

THE INTERPRETER OF THE LAW OF GOD

THE dominant message of Jesus dealt with the coming kingdom of God. But no prophet or teacher who addressed Jews of first-century Palestine could neglect the Torah, the foundation of all social and religious life. It is as we would expect, therefore, that Jesus appears in the early Christian tradition as a teacher of the law. Of course he was not a trained rabbi who could appeal to a list of noted teachers; he was a prophet from the common people. In contrast to the scribes who sought for a consensus in interpreting God's law, Jesus spoke with independence of judgment. He taught not with the learning of the schools, but with the authority of his own God-given insight.

1. THE WISDOM TEACHER

As a son of the Jewish tradition, Jesus was from one point of view a wisdom-teacher. The type of sayings in Proverbs and the Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach, found continuation with him. Taken by themselves, these words do not show the same critical urgency as the more directly prophetic utterances. They appear to give more timeless expression to spiritual truths and to crystallize a general insight by a figurative aphorism. "A city set on a hill cannot be hid." "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?" "The measure you give will be the measure you get." "For there is nothing hid except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light."

We cannot always be sure of the original context of such sayings as these. Probably in most cases Jesus formulated the word in connection with some immediate problem of his mission. For, though

Jesus wished to open the eyes of men to the true wisdom, he had no desire to write a book more clever than the Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach. Nor did he present himself as a competitor to the official interpreters of the law. From their standpoint he was a layman and outsider. But in calling men to repentance he had to state his ideal in relation to the prevailing ideas, and his speech naturally carried on the teaching tradition of his people.

2. General Attitudes Toward the Law

It is clear that Jesus had no idea of setting aside the law. He assumed its finality and authority, for it was God's law. Heaven and earth might pass away, but not the eternal will of God. Any suggestion that he desired to abolish the law was vehemently repudiated. When a rich man inquired how he might inherit the life of the age to come, he was referred to the commandments of the law. When asked about the great commandment, it was of course to be drawn from the Torah, the demand to give absolute allegiance to God. In argument with the Sadducees, he cited a passage from Exodus to substantiate belief in the resurrection. For Jesus, as for every Jew, the law was not a collection of human statutes but God's revelation to men.

We must not suppose that this applied only to the moral commands as we understand that term. Certainly he believed that love for God and man was more important than sacrifice. He taught that men must be reconciled to their enemies before they could presume to bring an offering in the Temple. But he never taught that sacrifices were superfluous. The cleansed leper was told to go and show himself to a priest and offer for his cleansing the things which Moses commanded. When Jesus drove the sellers of sacrificial animals out of the Temple court, he was not seeking to abolish the sacrificial system. He was acting from prophetic and holy zeal for the sanctity of this worship which was commanded in the law.

Nor can we say that Jesus accepted the written law but rejected the oral expansions, the traditions of the elders. Critical words are preserved in the gospels attacking certain scribal interpretations. But there were other parts of the oral law which he accepted without question. We read of people trying to touch "the border of his garment." This was a tassel or *zizith* which was required by Pharisaic prescription. Apparently Jesus wore such. He assumed the practice of table blessings, though they had no other sanction than the oral tradition. He constantly attended the synagogue worship, though that was nowhere prescribed in the written Torah.

Despite this devout and conservative attitude, the Christian tradition pictured Jesus as standing in violent opposition to the Pharisees, the most zealous champions of the law. This hostility may be exaggerated in places due to the later controversies between the Jews and the church, when Christians no longer considered obedience to the Torah essential to salvation. But it would be a great mistake to look upon this tension as simply a later fiction. Despite their agreements in reverence for the law, Jesus and the Pharisees had many points of difference. While it was the priestly hierarchy who were responsible for the arrest of Jesus, the earlier opposition came from those who distrusted his attitude toward the law.

3. The Sabbath

The largest number of controversies surround the observance of the sabbath. We have seen how minutely "work" was defined, so that the bearing of this prohibition upon every eventuality might be clear. One sabbath, as his disciples went through a grainfield, they plucked some wheat. They were not criticized for trespassing or stealing (for such gleaning was permissible) but for reaping and threshing on the sabbath. Jesus did not deny that the act involved sabbath labor. But he cited the instance of David and his companions when in an hour of need they ate the bread of the Presence which was permitted only to priests. We have no means of judging how great the need of his own disciples was at this time. But the controversy led Jesus to affirm the principle, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath." The evangelists were more eager to show Jesus' own lordship of the sabbath, but clearly that was not the original point. It was human need that took precedence over cult requirements. The rules for sabbath observance must be tested by the degree to which the needs of God's children were satisfied.

The other sabbath controversies concern healings which Jesus performed on the holy day. Though this was proscribed on the sabbath, the scribes were agreed that wherever life was endangered the sabbath law should give way. But in none of the incidents reported in the gospels was there immediate danger. One man had a paralyzed hand; another suffered from dropsy; a woman had been afflicted with an infirmity for eighteen years. These could surely have waited one more day for release from their bodily ailments. But Jesus did not wait. He operated on the principle that it was always right to do right. The law of God could never forbid an act of mercy. If an ox might be pulled out of a ditch on the sabbath day, it was permissible to heal suffering humanity even on the most sacred of days.

Here we see Jesus returning to the original principle. In the Deuteronomic form of the Ten Commandments, the observance of the sabbath was not grounded in a divine taboo on work on the seventh day but in a humanitarian concern for the needs of men. Slaves and beasts of burden were protected from overwork by the law of God (Deut. 5:14-15) . But, as so often is the case, the purpose of a religious observance had become obscured and the practice was self-defeating. Jesus called men away from the defense of a day to the protection and welfare of individual men and women. No one should deny that there were similar tendencies among other Jewish teachers, and words of a like character are cited from rabbis. Nevertheless, it is clear that Jesus shocked the righteous by his freedom at this point. It is interesting to note that sabbath observance was not one of the requirements laid upon the later gentile converts to the church.

4. Divorce

A second point of clash between Jesus and the interpreters of the law lay in the issue of divorce. Deuteronomy 24:1 prescribed that when a husband divorced a wife, he must give her a certificate of divorce. He could do so if he found "some unseemly thing" in her. The school of Shammai interpreted this strictly and maintained that it must involve actual unfaithfulness. The school of Hillel took an exceedingly liberal attitude, holding that if a wife burned her husband's dinner that was sufficient ground for divorce.

When appeal was made to Jesus he took the position of absolute rejection of all divorce. Strictly speaking, this meant a repudiation of a provision of the written law which explicitly permitted divorce under certain conditions. But Mark does not represent Jesus as repudiating the divine Torah on his own authority. He cited the Genesis word to the effect that God's original purpose in creation was that one man and one woman should live together in matrimony. Divorce was in violation of the divine ordinance in creation. "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

The position of Jesus on this point is one of his most certain teachings, for it is found in Paul, and Mark, and Q. It is apparent that the saying was a matter of much concern for the early church. They extended it to apply to the new conditions in the gentile world where a woman might also divorce her husband. They sought to define more precisely just when adultery was involved in remarriage. Possibly we may assign to Jesus the revolutionary standpoint (for a Jew) that a man could be guilty of adultery even though he did not violate the rights of another husband. That would involve a repudiation of polygamy, which was not expressly forbidden at this time. But we should certainly ascribe to Matthew and not to Jesus the exception made in that gospel permitting divorce in the case of unchastity. If this meant adultery, that called for the death penalty rather than divorce.

These gospel words show the attempt of the early church to regulate for the community on the basis of the religious ideal of Jesus. He was not offering an amendment to the divorce code of Palestine. He had no authority to alter the law, any more than a church can control the legislation of a modern state. Jesus was a prophetic interpreter of the will of God. He taught that divorce was only a concession which Moses permitted to sinful humanity. But the fundamental will of God was that one man and one woman should live together in holy matrimony. He did not look upon himself as repudiating the law, but as interpreting its basic intent.

It is granted by most Jewish scholars that in the first century the position of women in Palestine needed raising and that divorce had reached scandalous proportions. At a time when there was no honorable alternative to a woman's being the property of some man, the problem was manifestly different than in an age when women can be economically independent. Still, it would be hazardous to pretend to say what the teaching of Jesus might be in the differing circumstances of today. Strict as the word appears to us compared with his teaching about the sabbath, it seems to be based on the same principle, reverence for personality. If we feel that men's hearts are still hard, we must remember that Jesus was not legislating for life's failures, but proclaiming the perfect will of God in the light of the dawning of his reign.

5. Vows

A third point of division involved the inviolability of vows. Jewish law required that a vow taken before God must be performed. According to Mark, Jesus charged the Pharisees with using the binding character of oaths as a way of escape from supporting their parents. If a man vowed that his property was "given to God," he could not use it even to relieve the distress of his own parents. Jesus insisted that this violated the provision of the law to honor one's father and mother. Christians should realize in reading this incident that the final decision of the Jewish rabbis was the one for which Jesus pleaded. Men ought to be released from vows when they interfered with humanitarian duties. But apparently this decision was not universally admitted at the time of Jesus. Likewise, the conflict was not, as Mark states, one between the written law and the traditions of the elders. The binding character of vows was as much a part of the written law as anything. But oral interpretation had to determine which law was the more basic. Jesus pleaded for the primacy of man's duty to his parents.

Despite the clear stand of Jesus on divorce and the home, it should never be forgotten that he refused to look upon the family tie as the closest and most important. It was not so with himself. Whoever did the will of God was his mother and brother and sister. Anyone must be ready by contrast to hate his closest relatives when entrance to the kingdom of God was at stake. As a result of his message, families would be divided, father against son, and daughter against mother. Anyone who postponed discipleship until he had buried his father stood condemned. Despite the high evaluation of the family in the positions taken by Jesus on the interpretation of the Torah, no loyalty could rival the loyalty to the kingdom of God.

6. Fasting

It was this focal interest in the kingdom which explains his attitude toward *fasting*. Of course Jesus did not repudiate all fasting. A protracted fast is said to have preceded his entrance upon his public ministry. It is insincerity rather than fasting itself which he criticizes in the Sermon on the Mount. Nevertheless, critics were led to inquire why his disciples did not fast more regularly. The practice had evidently received no emphasis from Jesus. In answer, the master appealed to the fact that wedding parties were exempt from all ordinary fasts. If fasting was a sincere expression of the inner attitude, it was impossible for his disciples. They were living in the joy of anticipation of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God was symbolized not by a fast but by a feast. As a patch on a garment should fit the garment, so the expressions of religion should correspond to the mood of the worshiper. Jesus' message of the kingdom had poured revolutionary wine into the old forms, and inevitably they burst under the strain.

7. Contact with Sinners

As we proceed with the other debates over interpretations of the law, we see how many of the issues arose from the experiences of Jesus in calling men to repentance for entrance into the kingdom. The widest response came from the religious outcasts rather than from the religiously correct. They were the "sinners" who appear on so many pages of the gospels. These were the people who either from ignorance or carelessness failed to keep the detailed provisions of the law. Others may have desired to keep the law but felt frustrated by the practical necessities of life. No matter how kindly or generous they might be, they were sinners in the sight of the law. The most prominent single group was composed of the tax collectors or "publicans," such as Levi and Zacchaeus. They were drawn to Jesus as were women like the repentant sinner who washed his feet with her tears.

Pharisaism had demanded complete separation from these "lost sheep of the house of Israel." If men were to be holy as God was holy, they must be separate from all that defiled. And what could be more defilling than a man or woman who flouted God's law!

It is apparent that Jesus took exactly the opposite position. He ate with them; he made friends with them; he lived with them. Many of the controversies of Jesus with the Pharisees concerned not his own conduct but the conduct of his disciples. While occasionally this may indicate a situation in the later church, it often arose from the fact that many of them were drawn from the class of *'ammê ha-'areṣ*, the people of the land who did not keep the law. Jesus was criticised for associating with these people. His defense was epitomized in two typical sayings: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost."

Nothing can be added to these pregnant words of Jesus. Common sense dictates that we should bring help to those who need it rather than to those who do not. On one side, men were concentrating on saving themselves. Jesus was more concerned with what could be done for the saving of others. He did not fear defilement from people who were unclean in the eyes of the law. He had come to call all men to the repentance by which alone they could enter the kingdom of God. He found the "sinners" more willing to repent than those who fondly imagined that they "had no need of repentance."

8. Ritual Defilement

It is not strange therefore that we find Jesus quite indifferent to ritual defilements of other kinds. He spoke scornfully of those who meticulously cleansed the outside of platters and cups, but inwardly were full of extortion and all uncleanness. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." In contrast, the washing of dishes and purification of garments were of no significance. Jesus had little sympathy with the trend which would extend priestly purifications to all laymen.

Here again we have a crisp word which sums up the prophetic religion of Jesus: "There is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of a man are what defile him." Taken literally, this saying might be thought to cross out entire chapters of the book of Leviticus. But we should not suppose that Jesus was an iconoclast who intended to abolish the whole system of Jewish food laws and purification ceremonies. The early church would never have had to wrestle with the problem of table intercourse with Gentiles if Jesus had advocated the eating of pork or repudiated the ancestral customs. Rather, in all such words, Jesus sought to put religious emphases in their true proportion.

Jesus took for granted the ritual system enjoined by the law, though he often protested against the extreme concern with ritual defilement. He insisted that real defilement came from within the heart. Out of the abundance of the heart man speaks. The inner springs of thought and action must be cleansed before any life is truly good. First make the tree good; then worthy fruit may follow; a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. The good man brings what is good out of the treasure of his heart. In other words, a law which deals with the externals of religion cannot sound the depth of man's relation to God. That depends not upon outward obedience to commands, but upon the inner attitude.

9. Fulfilling the Law

This brings us face to face with the series of antitheses which Matthew collected in his Sermon on the Mount. This is prefaced by sayings descriptive of Jesus' whole attitude toward the law. The first of these is, "I came not to destroy the law and the prophets; I came not to destroy but to fulfill." The meaning of the word "fulfill" must be understood from the context. It describes the attitude of Jesus in three of the examples which follow, the laws against murder, adultery, and false swearing. Instead of seeking to abolish such laws Jesus came to establish them, and even more fully than before. We might almost paraphrase in English, "I came to fill the old law fuller." That did not imply its incompleteness. But the full meaning of the commandment needed elaboration by emphasis on the inner attitude. In the eyes of God, the sin did not lie in the outward acts which might be prohibited by statute, but in the inner motives known only to God.

If a man fully obeys the divine command, "You shall not kill," he should not stop short of complete refusal to hate. We begin to commit murder when we hate. The same principle was involved in the law against adultery. Prudential reasons might restrain one from the outward act, though the lust of the heart was still there.

God was as concerned with the sinful intention as with the extent to which the outward act was committed. Again, the command to take no false oath was not fully obeyed until men practiced such an honesty that all oaths were superfluous. The only reason to take an oath is to assure men that we are telling the truth. No word of men should require it, for God always demands absolute honesty as well as absolute purity and absolute love.

Matthew could not resist the temptation to include with these antitheses some words on similar topics which weakened the emphasis on the inner motive as the seat of sin. Likewise, in presenting Jesus as a new lawgiver he obscured the fundamental point of these revolutionary sayings. They really implied that God's will could not be codified into an outward law which might be enforced. They set before men ideals which could be approached but never fully attained. The exposition which Jesus gave of these commandments is a constant inspiration to higher standards of conduct. But obviously they were not intended as amendments to the statutes of Palestine, nor is there any possible way in which they could be made the standard for policing any future society. No jury could know when to convict a person of lustful desire or impure thoughts.

The substance and trend of these radical inward interpretations of the law were not opposed to the ideals elevated by the rabbis. Many similar individual sayings may be quoted from them. The difference is to be found in the setting in which Jesus placed them. He was not a new lawgiver replacing Moses. But in showing the implications of God's law he made clear that there were no righteous who did not need to repent. The attitude of the Pharisees toward "the sinners" could not be justified, for no man had fully performed these searching demands of God. We are expected to love him with our whole heart. Unless a man is lost in the naïvete of self-righteousness, he can never say, "All these have I kept from my youth."

10. The Higher Righteousness

Matthew gave another heading for the second series of antitheses. "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven." This epitomized the radical attitude which Jesus had sometimes taken toward the law. His repudiation of divorce as violating the creation ordinance of God was rightly inserted here. The other chief illustration was to be found in the repudiation of the *lex talionis.* That provision of the Torah restricted revenge to an exact equivalent of the wrong suffered. "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." At the time of Jesus money payments had largely replaced this, but the principle was retained of exacting an equal punishment for a given crime against society.

In contrast, Jesus condemned all retaliation and revenge. In a striking series of illustrations he rejected any attempt to right a past wrong with a new one. The principle which he laid down was not one of nonresistance to evil. It would be truer to say that his whole life consisted in one long resistance to evil. The question at stake was rather *how* evil should be resisted. The law called for retaliation; Jesus called for resisting evil by love. Of course he was not proposing a new criminal code for Palestine (though we must not assume too quickly that his principle ought not to be incorporated into a Christian method of dealing with crime). He was calling men to live above any level of legalism, and to rise to the plane of the Father who sends his rain on the just and the unjust. He did not promise, as a second-century optimist, that if we would only love our enemies we would not have any. He demanded nonretaliation no matter what it might cost.

In this case, Jesus did not appeal from one passage in the Torah to another. He might, like Paul, have quoted the beautiful passage from Proverbs, "If your enemy hunger, feed him" (25:21). Christians must never forget that such words are to be found in the Old Testament as well as some unfortunately vindictive expressions. Likewise, Christians have rarely shown themselves more successful than Jews in loving their enemies. This is not a point for invidious comparison but for common repentance. It was to this that Jesus called men in commending "the better way" of nonretaliation. He included our enemies among those whom we are commanded to love.

11. The Central Principle

How are we to explain the basis for these differences between Jesus and the Pharisees? In part, the ethical teaching of Jesus was definitely influenced by his kingdom hope. It is true that he never grounded an ethical duty by an appeal to the shortness of the time. Nevertheless, the extreme inwardness and radicalness of his demands, and his utter exclusion of any compromise with the conditions of the world or the frailties of human nature, would suggest that this expectation was not without influence. He presented men with his absolutes quite regardless of whether it would ever be practicable to forbid all divorce or to erect a new society on the basis of nonretaliation. This was the ultimate will of God under whose judgment men stood. Here was the standard by which they were called to repentance. Jesus did not present men with a temporary ethic related to the hardness of their hearts, or based on compromise with a sinful society. He faced men with what he was convinced was the eternal will of God.

But it would be a mistake to look upon the imminent expectation of the kingdom as the determining factor in the ethical teaching of Jesus. His conviction about the nature of God and his will for men was basic. Many apocalyptists believed in the nearness of the new age, but it provided them with justification for revenge rather than a demand to love their enemies. The ethical demands of Jesus rooted in his understanding of God. The concern of God for the welfare of his children defined the objective of his sabbath. The purposes of God in creation and redemption determined the relations of the family. Defilement in the sight of God is to be judged in relation to his mercy and justice. The perfection of God is the only possible standard by which men may be looked upon as good.

Jesus' message of the coming rule of God led directly to the nature of the God who was ultimately sovereign. His interpretation of the law of God led directly to the nature of the God whose will should be done on earth as it was in heaven. We must turn, therefore, to the reports of his teaching about the Father who was sovereign and the King who was all-merciful.

BIBLE READINGS

1. The Wisdom Teacher: Matt. 7:1-5; Mark 4:21-25; 9:49-50.
2. General Attitude Toward the Law: Matt. 5:17-18, 20; Mark 1:40-45; 10:17-20.
3. The Sabbath: Mark 2:23–3:6; Luke 13:10-17.
4. Divorce: Mark 10:2-12; Matt. 5:31-32; Luke 16:18.
5. Vows: Mark 7:9-13; 3:31-35; Luke 14:25-26.

6. **FASTING:** Matt. 4:2; 6:16-18; Mark 2:18-22.
7. **CONTACT WITH SINNERS:** Mark 2:13-17; Luke 7:36-50; 19:1-10.
8. **RITUAL DEFILEMENT:** Mark 7:1-5, 14-15; Matt. 5.8; Luke 6:43-45; 11:39-40.
9. **FULFILLING THE LAW:** Matt. 5:21-28, 33-37.
10. **THE HIGHER RIGHTEOUSNESS:** Matt. 5:38-48.

CHAPTER VII

THE GOD OF JESUS

JESUS did not bring a new God to men. From his earliest childhood he had worshiped the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He took for granted that God's will stood written in the law and the prophets. As a boy he could speak of the Temple as "my Father's house." Nevertheless, he made so clear the purpose and nature of that God that early Christians came to speak of him as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. THE GOD OF JESUS AND THE GOD OF PHILOSOPHY

Many modern queries about God are not answered in the teachings of Jesus, for he spoke to men and women who had inherited the Jewish monotheistic faith. He never had occasion to offer arguments for the existence of God, for that was taken for granted by his hearers. He never opposed any idolatry but Mammon worship, for they had long since rejected the use of images in worship. He never argued for God's unity, for all Jews believed that he was the one Creator of heaven and earth. He never discussed abstract problems of the attributes of God, for his hearers were not theologians but the simple people of the Galilean villages.

The God of Jesus was distinctly *personal.* He was neither a vague first cause nor an abstract principle, but a person with whom men might have fellowship. Jesus did not speculate about philosophical problems but thought in purely religious terms. He never discussed how the omnipotence of God is related to human freedom, or how it is compatible with belief in demonic powers. It was sufficient to say, "All things are possible with God." How the omniscience of God is unitable with real human volition is a question never raised. It was sufficient to believe, "Your heavenly Father knows." The God of Jesus was not a philosophical principle of explanation, and therefore is not directly comparable with the God of any modern philosopher.

This personal God was the Determiner of destiny. Man's relation to God was the supreme issue in life. Hence the first demand was the fulfillment of the Old Testament commandment to love God with one's whole being. But the goal of religion for Jesus was not mystical union with the divine essence; it was trust in a being who comes into personal relations with man. Hence, when Jesus expressed this in his own words he did not speak of love for God but said, "Have faith in God." Faith could move mountains because it was faith in God. Obedience to his will was the only defensible basis for human living, and the consummation of that will was the goal of history. The kingship of the God of righteousness must come into the world which he had created.

2. Social Analogies

The only way in which men can speak of God is through some analogy drawn from human experience. The Infinite cannot be discussed in any other vocabulary. The last refuge of idolatry lies in taking these analogies literally. In a machine age, men may draw their analogies from mechanism. But Jesus followed Jewish precedent in utilizing social experience. Since fellowship with God is a personal experience, he used various human analogies to express different aspects of God's relation to men. No one human relationship could possibly express all that God meant to men.

The first analogy which Jesus employed was that of the relation of a *king* to his subjects. It is unnecessary to repeat the evidence for the centrality of the "kingdom of God" in his message. We have seen that that meant essentially the kingship of God, his sovereignty over the world he had created and sustains. Sometimes the figure is that of the relation of a *master* to his servants and slaves. In each case it signifies God's right to rule over the hearts and lives of men. It is a great mistake to suppose that Jesus replaced the idea of the divine kingship with that of divine fatherhood. More actual parables are based on the relationship of king or master than on the analogy of the family. Both analogies stand side by side, just as in Jewish thought. The teaching of Jesus cannot be translated into democratic symbols, for God is God whether men "vote" for him or not. But if kingship no longer belongs to our social experience, it is due in part to the fact that we have come to see that no man can stand in the place of sovereignty that God must hold.

Jesus likewise used the human analogy of a *judge*. The nearness of the complete reign of God meant judgment upon all who would not repent. We have seen how Jesus pronounced woes as well as beatitudes. We may be universalists in our own thinking, but there is no evidence that Jesus was. He saw a broad and populous road which led to destruction. "Judge not, that you be not judged." Men should fear the one who had the power to cast soul and body into Gehenna. God was a being who drew moral distinctions. The consummation of his kingdom lay beyond an act of judgment. Salvation had its real meaning against the background of that judgment. Grace and mercy first become luminous in the shadow of that doom.

But the most important human analogy used by Jesus was that of a *father*. Of course it was not new, for the relation of the parent provides a universal and immediate comparison with the relation of God to man. There are very few peoples which have not used it in their thought of God, and it was much more prominent in first-century Judaism than in the Old Testament. This social analogy first becomes significant when it is joined with a lofty conception of fatherhood. Its use by Jesus may be a window into the character of the earthly father whom he had known. Yet it is important to note that in the earlier strata of gospel tradition Jesus speaks of God as Father relatively seldom. First in the material peculiar to Matthew and in the Fourth Gospel does this address to God become especially frequent. We must never suppose that the new factor in Jesus' teaching about God lay in the use of a new name.

Yet the fact remains that in the letters which Paul wrote in the Greek language we twice find the very Aramaic syllables in which Jesus addressed God in prayer. *Abba* impressed the followers of Jesus in a very unusual way. It may be that modern students of Aramaic have discovered the clue. They tell us that the form ordinarily used in address to God was *Abbi,* usually with the addition "who art in heaven" to distinguish from the earthly father.

Abba is seldom witnessed except in the intimate relations of the family. Apparently the first followers of Jesus were impressed that he should use this rather than the more formal address to God. It expressed the closest possible intimacy.

3. The God Who Answers Prayer

This observation leads us to the first aspect of the teaching of Jesus on God: he was the God who answered prayer. Behind the teaching of Jesus on prayer lay his *practice* of prayer. The modern Christian wishes that he could accompany Jesus to observe his private devotion. This is impossible, for he criticized sharply those who prayed in the synagogues and street corners to be seen by men. He advised men to retire to their inner chambers and shut the door when they prayed. As for himself, he was accustomed to go apart on the mountainside and to deserted places. It is not strange therefore that few prayers of Jesus could be preserved in the early traditions. Yet the evangelists record the impression which his prayer life had made in the number of times when it is said that Jesus prayed, particularly at the great crises of his experience. Though the objective of the evangelists was not to portray the religious experiences of Jesus, no account of his ministry could leave out retirement for prayer. It was a natural outgrowth of fellowship with Jesus to ask that he teach them how to pray.

Jesus taught men to pray in a *spirit of humility.* The self-righteous spirit closed the ears of God to men. When a Pharisee turned his religious exercises into an exhibition of self-congratulation it merited just rebuke. There could be no place before God for pride in our punctilious piety. A tax collector who expressed humble repentance was accepted by God more readily. Man can never come to God with any claims upon him, but in dependence and out of need.

Jesus taught men to pray in *a spirit of unselfishness.* It is true that the model which he gave included prayer for the morrow's bread. But that was expressed as a collective petition. It was not a prayer for an exclusive privilege. And even that was subordinate to the prayer for the coming of God's kingdom and the hallowing of his name over the whole earth. Jesus urged men to pray that workers be sent out into the ripe harvest. He said that some demons were driven out only by prayer. Since prayer was fellowship with the God of all men, it must lift us out of our self-centeredness if it is to be genuine. We should even pray for those who persecute us if we would be like the heavenly Father.

Jesus taught men to pray in *a spirit of forgiveness,* for we must all ask forgiveness from God. The divine forgiveness depended upon forgiving those who have wronged us. Jesus is never represented as teaching that forgiveness of sin depended upon acceptance of some theological belief. It did depend upon the forgiving attitude toward our fellow men. This was emphasized in the hyperbolic story of the man who had been forgiven a debt of $10,000,000. He immediately went out and threw one of his fellow slaves into prison because he could not repay a debt of $17. No punishment could be too great for such ingratitude! And so Jesus said, "If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." When offering a sacrifice, if a man remembers that a brother has something against him, he should first go and get right with that brother. No man can come into the presence of God without a spirit of reconciliation toward his neighbor.

Finally, Jesus taught men to pray in *a spirit of persistence.* In the strongest language he insisted that he who asks will receive, and that the prayer of faith is certain to be answered. This was illustrated by striking parables. Even an unrighteous judge vindicated a poor widow's cause when she kept after him with dogged persistence. Even a comfort-loving householder finally got up at midnight to lend his neighbor the bread which was desired for a late-arriving guest. If such self-centered people finally would respond to the earnest pleading of men, how much more would the Father in heaven answer the petitions of those who sought with all their hearts.

We must guard against interpreting these words as if Jesus looked upon God as an oriental Sultan from whom any boon might be secured if men worked long enough through the right mediators. We might use the analogy of the scientist who in his laboratory must ask, and seek, and knock with agelong persistence before the answers to his questions are given. But Jesus did not think of man's relation to God in such impersonal terms.

The clue to his meaning is to be found in the figures which he used and in his own practice of prayer. If a son asks bread of his father, he will not give the boy a stone. That is true to life, but it does not follow that every silly request will be granted. The example of earthly fathers leads to the conclusion that the heavenly Father will much more give *good things* to those who ask. But if a son is to receive good things he must first persist in discovering through prayer what are the good gifts of God. They are the gifts which correspond to the will of God. Hence the final prayer of Jesus always was, "Thy will be done." When he himself stood in the hour of deepest agony, he did not persist in prayer to attain deliverance from physical harm. His prayer was answered when his spirit assented, "Not my will but thine be done." Seen in this light, prayer can never be made a cheap way of getting what we want from a God who is conceived in the image of our errand boy. Prayer is entering into the purposes of God, and that calls for never-ending persistence.

4. The God of Providential Care

The God of Jesus was a God of providential care. Illustrations were offered from the world of nature. God fed the ravens who neither sowed nor reaped. He clothed the fields with the bright-colored anemones which still blossom in the Galilean spring. Not a sparrow falls without the concern of God. These examples were not offered to demonstrate a benevolent order of nature. Jesus was drawing the familiar argument from the lesser to the greater. If God took such care of animal and plant life, how much more does he care for man, more valuable than any sheep or sparrow?

At first glance this sounds naïve and idyllic. Does nature, ' red in tooth and claw," reveal a providential care? The historian's task is not to defend Jesus' teaching about God but to understand it. But Jesus did not ignore the fact that the grass of the field is thrown into the oven. Sparrows do fall, and it is scant comfort for some to be told that "there is at least one mourner at every sparrow's funeral." It may be that the very hairs of our heads are numbered, but Jesus is never reported as promising that his disciples would be saved from baldness. These illustrations from the world of nature were to enforce the truth that God had provided richly, and men should trust him for food and clothing. Such was the life of the kingdom of God. Nothing indicates more clearly that the kingdom of God has not yet come than the fact that anxious care is the inevitable fate of so many of God's children.

But God's providence did not mean to Jesus that his favorites were to be protected from suffering and difficulty. For himself, God's loving care was consistent with a cruel death upon a cross, and he promised that all who would follow him must be ready for suffering and hardship. To jump from a high pinnacle was not to trust God but to tempt him. Daniel exhorted his countrymen to trust a God who delivered from the fiery furnace and the lion's den. The Psalmist assured, "A thousand will fall at your side, ... but it will not come near you" (91:7). But Jesus did not understand God's care in terms of such partiality. The God who sends the sunshine and the rain on just and unjust does not play favorites. Trust in him is not a talisman to ward off persecution, suffering, or death. God's care would be shown in the kingdom which he would send. Man's concern should be directed there, not toward worry about temporal needs.

5. The God of Forgiving Grace

The God of Jesus was a God of forgiving grace. Of course all Jews believed that God would forgive the repentant sinner. Since the days of Hosea, God had been recognized as a God of mercy who would pardon in his lovingkindness. While sin offerings conditioned the divine mercy in a measure, we must never accuse Judaism of repudiating God's forgiveness. Yet at this point many Jewish interpreters have themselves recognized one of the greatest elements of originality in the message of Jesus. The Pharisees did hold that God's holiness meant separation from sinful men. We have in earlier chapters examined the "separatist" ideal of the Pharisees and the way in which Jesus offended them by associating with sinners as notorious as tax collectors and harlots. Jesus thought more of the loving forgiveness that sought to bring the sinner to repentance than of the holiness of God which separated him from sinful men.

It was not an entirely new idea when Jesus brought to men the assurance, "Your sins are forgiven you." But the essence of originality lies not in novelty, but in bringing new power to an insight. That Jesus did. Neither sickness nor sin were insuperable barriers to the divine forgiveness. Repentant faith, not righteousness, was the door of entrance to fellowship with God. And that was a door through which the "good" found entrance more difficult than those who could not so easily deny their sin and need. Hence Jesus could insist that the tax collectors and harlots would enter the kingdom of God ahead of the righteous Pharisees.

The God of forgiving grace was presupposed by Jesus when he set forth the radical, inward, ethical demands of God. We have seen how Jesus expounded the law of God in a way which made it clear that no man could completely fulfill that law. Hence, the Pharisee needed forgiveness just as much as did the "sinner." Jesus did not seek to bring men—even the best men—to despair in their endeavor to perform the will of God. He sought to lead all back to their dependence on the forgiving grace of God.

The parables through which Jesus enforced this truth were largely formulated with the contrast between Pharisee and "sinner" in mind. The son who said "yes" (Pharisee) but did not go into the field was not really obeying his father as much as the son who said "No" (sinner) but then went. God's relation to men is like that of a man who made a great feast. On the appointed day, the invited guests refused to come. What was there to do then but to send out and invite others to the feast? The versions of that story in Matthew and Luke are heavily overladen with allegory from the experience of the later church. But it is easy to see the outline of the story which illustrated the fact that God in his grace accepted men on an entirely different basis from that of merit. A slave does not earn a reward from his master even after a hard day's work in the field. So when a man has done all, he still needs God's forgiveness.

One of the most striking stories was the one about the apparently eccentric owner of a vineyard. After bargaining with laborers at the prevailing wage and sending them to work, he went out at intervals during the day to find other laborers. To these he simply said, "I will give you what is right." This continued even until five o'clock in the afternoon. At the end of the day all were paid the same wage, beginning with the last. When the first grumbled, the master of the vineyard appealed to his right to *give,* not on the basis of what men had done, but in relation to their need. The story was not intended to teach anything about a just organization of economic life. Behind it lay the assumption of the righteous man who had "bargained" with God for a due reward for his righteousness. But the God of Jesus was not one from whom rewards might be earned. The only "reward" was the kingdom which would belong to all who entered; and entrance depended on the gift of divine forgiveness.

The same situation called forth the parables about the "lost" which Luke assembled in his famous fifteenth chapter. He gives as the setting the disapproval of the Pharisees that Jesus was associating with tax collectors and sinners. In contrast, Jesus stressed the joy of God at the recovery of the lost. A shepherd who had lost only one of his hundred sheep went out on the mountain to seek that sheep. When he found it, he summoned his friends to rejoice with him. There was likewise a woman who had lost one of her string of ten coins. She was not content until she had lit her lamp and searched that little cottage until she found it. Then she called in her neighbors to rejoice with her. God also had greater joy over the recovery of the lost than anything else. If the Pharisees were really friends of God they would join heartily in rejoicing at the recovery of these "lost sheep of the house of Israel."

The third story was even more pointedly directed to the situation in which Jesus stood. Its great human interest has led to misinterpretation of its point and to unfortunate allegorizing. The younger son in a family demanded of his father a distribution of the property. On receiving his share, this son went into a foreign country and squandered the property in dissolute living. He sank to such depths that he had to hire out to a Gentile and tend swine. In his hunger, he thought of the plenty at home and decided to return. His father greeted him with joy, and instead of listening to his professions of repentance, ordered a great feast in celebration of the recovery of the "lost" son. But the older brother took a very different attitude. He felt that his previous correct conduct had not been appreciated, and that it was unjust to squander more of the family property just because the prodigal had returned to live at their expense.

Allegorizers have not been able to resist the temptation of this charming story. No special significance is to be attached to "the far country," or "the husks," or "the robe." The story is a little vignette out of life containing one point which is to be compared with the relationship between God and man. The father is not God any more than the owner of slaves in other parables. We cannot even say that the younger lad is a model of repentance, for the primary motivation for his return to the father's house was the fact that he was hungry. Of itself, there was nothing wrong in going into a far country, and it cannot be denied that there was much justice in the complaint of the older brother.

But none of these things enters into the correct interpretation of the parable. The point lies in *the contrast between the joy of the father in the recovery of the lost, and the grudging resentment of the older brother.* The boy who was ultimately lost was the older brother. Therefore, the application of the story was not directed toward "sinners." It was not to convince them that they should return to God because they would be forgiven. Jesus had convinced them of God's graciousness by his own attitude of forgiving love. The story was directed toward the Pharisees to remind them that they should welcome the repentant sinner with the same joy that God did. If they failed to do so, they were guilty of the sin of pride and were "blind guides."

6. God's Seeking Love

Here is the climax of Jesus' teaching about God. God was not only merciful to forgive the sinner who repented. He was seeking, forgiving love. God took the initiative in calling the unrighteous. Sinful man had not sought God, but a gracious God was seeking him. Entrance to his kingdom was not on the basis of merit, but depended upon the response of humble repentance. This teaching was not something divorced from the life of Jesus, but the controversies evoked by his own conduct demanded constant reiteration of the theme. He himself had sought out the sinful because God was doing it all the time. His good news of forgiveness was part of a life in which that had become incarnate.

Since this teaching of Jesus has inevitably been studied through the formulations which were made by the early church it is appropriate to close the chapter with the conclusion to which Christian believers were led. Jesus had taught that God was seeking, forgiving love. The early Christians taught that the supreme expression of this love was to be found in the sending of Jesus.

"God shows his love for us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." These words of Paul carry the interpretation this one step further. The love which Jesus had shown toward sinful men was nothing less than an expression of the love of God. The Fourth Gospel goes on to the great Christ testimony. "He who has seen me has seen the Father." When men saw the love with which Jesus sought the outcasts of Jewish society, when they saw him seek to bring forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration to all in need, they had seen in action the deepest truth about the eternal God. Here was a revelation of the essential nature of God. "God so loved the world that he gave his Son."

BIBLE READINGS

1. The God of Jesus and the God of Philosophy: Luke 2:49; Mark 10:27; 11:22-25; 12:26, 28-34.
2. Social Analogies: Matt. 5:35; 18:23; Luke 16:13; 12:4-5; Matt. 22:11-14; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6.
3. The God Who Answers Prayer: Mark 1:35; 6:46; Luke 3:21; 6:12; 9:28; 10:21; Matt. 19:13; 5:44; Mark 9:29; Matt. 6:5-15; 5:23-24; Luke 11:1-13; Matt. 9:37-38; Luke 18:1-14; Matt. 18:21-35; Mark 14:32-42.
4. The God of Providential Care: Matt. 4:5-7; 5:11, 43-48; 6:25-34; 10:29-31.
5. The God of Forgiving Grace: Mark 2:1-12; Luke 7:36-50; Matt. 21:28-32; Luke 14:16-24; 17:7-10; Matt. 20:1-15; Luke 15.
6. God's Seeking Love: Rom. 5:8; John 3:16; 14:9.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CAREER OF JESUS

JESUS was called by God to proclaim the nearness of his kingdom. He summoned men to repentance in view of the impending crisis. This demand called for an exposition of the will of God which brought on clashes with the official interpreters of the Torah. This message meant a profound illumination of God as Judge and as King, and pre-eminently as a Father whose forgiving grace was manifested both in the life and in the teaching of Jesus. In the last three chapters we have outlined these central aspects of his message. It is even more difficult to reconstruct the course of the ministry of Jesus, but we must do our best to piece together the fragmentary information which is available.

1. PREACHING IN GALILEE

The work of Jesus was inaugurated in the Jewish villages of Galilee, beginning from Capernaum. He taught in the synagogues, as men gathered about him in private homes, and out in the open country. The only other Galilean towns mentioned in the gospels by name are Magdala, Chorazin, Nain, Cana, and Nazareth. Great throngs of people were drawn to hear Jesus. This was a natural response to one who proclaimed the approaching consummation of the hope of Israel. The healings which accompanied his ministry also contributed to the magnetism of his message. Clearly the countryside was moved by this Galilean prophet who preached with a new directness and power.

The results of this ministry to the masses cannot be traced in detail. Who could have told, even then, just how many were led to more genuine repentance, and to greater humility toward God? Many of these simply returned to their appointed tasks in life to wait in devout eagerness for the coming of God's salvation. Others went further. They were eager to "follow" Jesus and to join with him in the work of arousing the people to repentance. Our metaphorical use of the word "follow" leads us to forget that originally it had a very literal significance. It meant to join the group of those who accompanied the Master from village to village, who learned his message more deeply, and who did what they could to forward "the cause." Many sayings in the tradition show the stringent demands which Jesus laid upon those who would thus become his disciples. They must be willing to follow a homeless man who had not where to lay his head. They must sell all that they had and abandon the responsibilities of home and profession. Only those who would pay the price of ultimate self-denial were wanted in his service.

Many felt that they could not make these sacrifices. Mark recounts the story of an anonymous rich man who turned away sadly to his possessions. Jesus had ample opportunity to see how concern for possessions tied men to the present age and shut them out of the kingdom of God. Mark also told the story of the tax collector, Levi, who did forsake his toll booth to follow Jesus. Many of these who left all to follow Jesus were fishermen like Peter and Andrew, James and John. There were some women who joined in the movement, at least by contributing of their means to support the little group of workers. Probably the group of disciples fluctuated in size for a time, but ultimately Jesus chose twelve to be with him. Traditions vary on the names of one or two of these. It may be that substitutions were made from time to time, but there is no reason why the symbolism of the twelve may not go back to Jesus himself.

The tradition affirms that at least once Jesus tried the experiment of sending his disciples out two by two on a preaching mission through the villages of Galilee. When we observe how stupid the disciples are represented at this time, we wonder what they could accomplish. But at least they could announce the nearness of the kingdom of God and call men to repentance. They were sent out with the lightest possible equipment consonant with full efficiency. They were to move with haste because of the urgency of the task. This preaching mission of the disciples should remind us of the obvious fact that they were not always with Jesus, and probably no one of them had firsthand knowledge of considerable portions of his ministry.

2. Results of the Work

On the whole the results were disappointing. In his own family Jesus met only distrust and misunderstanding. His mother and brothers sought in vain to induce him to return home. In his own village, people were offended in him; he could do no mighty works there because of their unbelief. Though they were astonished that such a teacher and leader should have come from their midst, they did not accept his message. In most of the other towns the results were likewise meager. Jesus could only pronounce woes upon the Galilean cities. Heathen cities such as Tyre and Sidon would have repented had they seen what Bethsaida and Capernaum had seen. Consequently, they would fare better in the judgment than these who had turned a deaf ear to his call. They had heard, but failed to act; as such, they were like men who built a house upon the sand.

One of the stories of Jesus reflects his meditation upon the varied results of his work. When a sower goes out to sow, the crop depends upon the soil. The seed that falls on the beaten path is eaten by the birds. The seed that falls on stony soil has no root and withers away. The seed that falls among thorns is soon choked and dies. Only that which falls on good ground brings forth a harvest. Every teacher must anticipate as varied response to his work as the farmer in his sowing. His results likewise depend upon the receptiveness of the hearers. The story may be read with a feeling of pessimism that so much seed has apparently been wasted. Or, it may be read with optimism, because there has been some crop. Jesus could announce both blessings and woes. His truth had remained hid from "the wise and understanding," but its wisdom had been revealed to many babes.

We have no means of knowing just how long this Galilean ministry lasted. It seems to have been finally cut short not by the indifference or hostility of the Jewish towns, but by the opposition of Herod, the tetrarch. We are told that he identified Jesus with John the Baptist, whom he had beheaded. Once that conclusion was reached, Jesus would not be left unmolested. When

Jesus was warned that Herod sought to kill him, he replied that he would keep out of the reach of "that fox."

Some time before the departure of Jesus from Galilee, an event took place by the Sea of Galilee which made such a profound impression on the Christian tradition that it is reported in all four gospels, and there are two versions in both Mark and Matthew. As reported in the later tradition, it was a stupendous marvel in the multiplication of food, far surpassing any in the Old Testament. Elisha had fed one hundred men with barley loaves (II Kings 4:42-44), and Elijah had made a widow's cruse of oil inexhaustible (I Kings 17:16). But Jesus had taken five loaves and two fish; after he had blessed and had broken the bread, thousands of men ate and were filled, and baskets full of fragments were gathered up to carry to the needy.

What was the nature of the incident which led to these early Christian narratives? Surely it is inadequate to suggest that this story arose from the example of generous sharing which Jesus set during an afternoon picnic by the lakeside. But a literal multiplication of food is difficult to defend for one who called the turning of stones into bread a temptation of the devil, and who refused to give any sign from heaven to legitimate his ministry. The most probable theory is that before his retirement from Galilee Jesus celebrated a meal with a large company of followers in anticipation of the banquet of the kingdom of God. All of our accounts of the feeding by the lake are strongly influenced by eucharistic language, and the gathering up of the fragments reminds us that the poor of the early church were fed by charity from the common table. Here was more than an example of the concern of Jesus and his disciples for the physical needs of men. Here the table fellowship of Jesus and his disciples was widened to include a larger company. They broke bread together in anticipation of the feast of the kingdom of God.

3. Outside Galilee

In the months of retirement from Galilee there must have been more opportunity to concentrate upon the "training of the Twelve." But it is not possible for us to trace itineraries of travel, nor to assign particular teachings of Jesus to this period of his life. Individual stories came to the evangelists which were located "in the region of Tyre and Sidon," "in the villages near Caesarea Philippi," or "in the Decapolis." These were strung together as best they could, but we are not able to describe actual journeys. We can at best say that Jesus probably visited these places during his stay outside Galilee. Also, new emphases in Mark's account of the teaching of Jesus may represent simply development in *his* story, not in the teaching of Jesus.

These trips took Jesus into predominantly gentile territory, but the tradition is clear that Jesus had no intention of extending his work to them. His own people might be blind and unresponsive, but it was to them that he had been sent. It is striking that the gospels report two instances of healings at a distance, and these are the two stories in which Gentiles are said to have been helped by Jesus. In the case of the Syrophoenician woman's daughter, Jesus is represented as distinctly hesitant. Only when the woman insisted that even dogs under the table get the crumbs which the children drop did Jesus consent to help; and we are told that the child was healed. In the other case, a centurion at Capernaum had such confidence in the authoritative word of Jesus that the Master gave his heartiest commendation. Because of his great faith, Jesus announced that his servant was healed.

But such incidents did not lead Jesus to turn to the more responsive gentile hearers. And in neither case was he brought into bodily contact with the Gentile who was healed. In his preaching, Jesus had laid down conditions for entrance to the kingdom of God which contained nothing distinctively Jewish. The "many" who would come from the east and the west to sit down with the fathers in the kingdom of God might well include Gentiles. But clearly Jesus believed that the preparation for the coming of the kingdom must be made among Jews. His own ministry was to them. And some at least of his later followers supposed that Jesus forbade anything beyond that.

Luke preserves a different tradition and one which reveals a special interest in Samaritans. He dropped completely Mark's idea of wandering journeys to the north of Galilee and substituted an extended trip to Jerusalem through the semiheathen country of Samaria. He took a variant version (probably Q) of the mission of the disciples and presented it as a mission of "seventy," clearly typifying the seventy nations who were to hear the Christian gospel. But as one reads through Luke's account, it soon becomes clear that he had no real tradition of a deliberate mission of Jesus to either Samaritans or Gentiles. Casual contacts with them had not been avoided. A despised Samaritan might be used as an example of mercy or of gratitude. But Luke offers no real evidence that Jesus' mission extended beyond the Jewish people.

4. The Messianic Question

It was after the close of the Galilean ministry that the evangelists placed the confession of the disciples to the messiahship of Jesus. Mark gives the earliest tradition; he located the incident in the region of Caesarea Philippi. He represented Jesus as taking the initiative and inquiring, "Who do men say that I am?" It is to be remembered that up to this time the message of Jesus had dealt with the coming of the kingdom of God and entrance to it. He had not spoken of his own relation to that kingdom. While demons had recognized Jesus as the Son of God, that was evidence of their supernatural knowledge concerning the one who was overthrowing their power. No human beings who had heard Jesus speak had addressed him as the coming Messiah.

From the reply of the disciples it appears that Jesus had been identified with John the Baptist, or with Elijah, who was to come before the end for the restoration of all things, or with one of the prophets. But when Jesus asked their opinion, Peter replied for the group, "You are the Christ." Jesus charged them that they should tell no one. This original conclusion of the story is obscured for Bible readers who turn to Matthew. He gives a later tradition commending Peter's word, and declaring him to be the foundation of the church. But according to Mark, Jesus neither accepted nor denied the confession. Instead, he went on to tell of the suffering of the Son of man and of his rejection by that generation. His followers would likewise be called on to suffer, but they would gain their lives when the Son of man would come in his glory.

We face here the most puzzling problem in the study of the gospels. Why did the messiahship of Jesus occupy no place in his public preaching? That this was the case is clear from the earliest records. At no point in his public ministry did Jesus make an unequivocal declaration of his messiahship. When false witnesses were brought forward at the hearing before the high priest, not one could state, "I heard him claim to be the Messiah." Only through a direct question put to Jesus was that issue drawn into the trial. For Mark, the messiahship of Jesus was a secret which he would not divulge until the very end. Even when he was specifically asked about his authority, Jesus put off his questioners with a counterquestion about John the Baptist. How is this evidence to be interpreted?

The traditional explanation has been that Jesus withheld a disclosure of his own messiahship because of the political and materialistic associations of the title. First of all, he had to replace these with his own more spiritual conception of the messianic task to which God had called him. To claim messiahship before the masses would awaken false expectations. This point of view contains a certain truth. Jesus did repudiate any conception of his career in terms of a military conqueror. The story of his temptations mirrors correctly his repudiation of all that was associated with the Son of David conception. Though he is addressed in the tradition at times as "son of David," Jesus took no steps toward a political kingship. If David called the Messiah his Lord, surely "son of David" was an inadequate conception of God's Anointed. The deliverance he proclaimed was not from a foreign yoke but from sin and the powers of evil.

But the other side of this explanation is less satisfactory. Though Messiah might be a very fluid term in first-century Judaism, it did have certain inescapable associations. When modern interpreters talk about a "more spiritual conception of messiahship," they often extend the term to the general idea of the "supreme revealer of God." But messiahship involved the *function* of rule under God in his kingdom. If Jesus never conceived his mission in such terms, it is misleading to apply the word "Messiah" at all. It would be more logical to say that Jesus rejected all *messianic* conceptions of his career in favor of his own more spiritual understanding.

According to a second point of view, the messianic secret was a device of the evangelists for reading back into the life of Jesus the faith of the later church. Belief in the messiahship of Jesus arose from the resurrection appearances. Therefore the Christian tradition could not assign it to the open preaching of Jesus. Instead, it is presented as a secret during his lifetime. There are some facts which lend plausibility to this interpretation. According to one account, Jesus was transfigured on a mountain in the presence of three intimate disciples. Moses and Elijah appeared there with him. On the way down the mountain "Jesus charged the disciples to tell no one until the Son of man had risen from the dead." Does not this indicate that the belief that Jesus transcended the law and the prophets first arose at the time of the resurrection? May not the transfiguration be a resurrection story dated back into the life of Jesus? Those who follow this interpretation claim that the charge, "king of the Jews," simply involved the accusation that Jesus was promoting insurrection. The indiscreet conduct of his disciples led to the arrest of Jesus; but he had not looked upon himself as Messiah during his lifetime, nor had anyone else. Jesus preached the nearness of the kingdom of God, but his own messiahship belonged first to the theology of the later church.

According to a third interpretation of the evidence, the messiahship of Jesus was a secret because his rule belonged first to the future when the kingdom of God should come. The title which Jesus employed was that of "Son of man." In an earlier chapter we have seen its use in the Parables of Enoch to designate the Elect One in the kingdom of God. Jesus did not deny that he was Messiah, but whenever he himself spoke, it was concerning the Son of man. There are passages where it could easily be taken as someone distinct from himself. But the evangelists clearly meant to identify the one who was expected on the clouds of heaven with the Jesus who had proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom. Naturally the question arises how Jesus, a teacher on earth, could think of himself as the heavenly figure who would introduce the end of the age. Did he expect, like Enoch, to be exalted to heaven? Did he look upon death as the necessary prelude to a return in glory? To all such speculative possibilities it can only be said that there is no contemporary evidence by which we can follow the psychological processes of Jesus. We can only recognize the fact that Jesus did not claim messianic rule during his lifetime. But he is presented as identifying his life in some way with the Son of man who would inaugurate the new age.

Admittedly such ideas appear distant and strange to modern readers. No wonder it has seemed simpler to some interpreters to insist that the messiahship of Jesus was "purely spiritual," or that he never claimed to be Messiah at all! But the historian's task is not to present a Jesus who conforms to the preconceptions of twentieth-century men and women. We must discover a reasonable explanation for the origin of the Christian church. We can understand the rise of the resurrection faith more plausibly if we recognize that already during his lifetime, within the circle of disciples, Jesus was identified as the ruler of the coming kingdom. It was not a prerogative which Jesus claimed, but if God had called him to this highest work, how could he refuse? I believe that this line of interpretation best fits the total evidence. Jesus saw his life in some way identified with the coming Son of man.

5. Jerusalem Days

Before his death, Jesus carried on a ministry in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Mark confines this to a week, but there are numerous indications, even in the synoptic tradition, that this is too short a time. John extends the period to several months. In addition to earlier visits for festivals, he reports that Jesus was in Jerusalem from the feast of Tabernacles (October 13 in A.D. 29) until the feast of Dedication (December 21). He then went away to the east of the Jordan and was in retirement until a few days before Passover. In favor of this chronology is the story of the Triumphal Entry. That portrayed Jesus as riding at the head of a group of exultant pilgrims singing of the coming kingdom of David. The strewing of branches would fit in much better with the processions accompanying either Tabernacles or Dedication than anything at the time of a Passover. Though the synoptic evangelists connect it closely with the driving of the money-changers out of the Temple, we know from the Talmud that their tables were taken down before the beginning of the month of Nisan, while Jesus died near the fifteenth. Clearly there is no dependable chronological sequence which we can follow for the Jerusalem days any more than for the ministry in Galilee.

We may assume that the message of Jesus in Jerusalem was essentially the same as it had been in Galilee. But the issues had naturally become sharpened. He made an appeal for that national repentance which some rabbis believed would hasten the coming of God's deliverance. But for Jesus, the absence of that repentance meant the certainty of a coming doom. In the earlier days there had been more hope that a favorable response might come. Now the grim finality of repudiation dawned more clearly. No wonder the gospel tradition makes Jesus identify himself and the kingdom so completely! To reject God's final appeal which he was bringing to them meant rejection in the kingdom that was soon to come. No wonder he burst out: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together even as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you would not!"

The opposition of most of the Pharisees continued. Matthew and Mark located the bitter denunciations of Jesus against them here in Jerusalem. Some modern Jews have been unduly resentful of these strong words. Why should anyone doubt that there was justification for these charges? Jesus accused the Pharisees of hypocrisy; they were parading their piety to be seen of men, professionalizing religion so that the common man was shut out, honoring the progressives of yesterday while they rejected the prophets of their own day. I believe that the charges were true of some devout Jews of the first century because I know how true they are of many Christians in our own day. As long as these words are read, not to make invidious comparisons, but as portrayals of the sins of the righteous at all times, they will have their rightful chastening effect. But it was not the Pharisees who were primarily instrumental in condemning Jesus to die.

They are represented as joining with adherents of Herod in posing the political question, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar?" To the Jewish patriot, it was not "lawful" that God's people should be tributary to a heathen power. To the devout, it was blasphemous to carry the image of a heathen ruler on one's person. Here was a question which bristled with difficulties. To deny the obligation to pay taxes would have been treason, and a ground for accusation before Pilate. To confirm the obligation would have threatened popular support. We must not suppose that the answer of Jesus was merely a clever sidestepping of the issue. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" must be interpreted from the context. Since Caesar had placed his image on the coins, they must belong to him. Why not give them back?

But man had been made in the image of God and belonged wholly to him. "Render to God the things that are God's," which means a man's whole allegiance. The incident reveals that Jesus was not offering to his countrymen a clever solution of their political problem. He was calling for the supreme repentance which God demanded in the hour of salvation and judgment.

Here at Jerusalem Sadducees were first prominent among the hearers of Jesus. The gospels report a discussion of the resurrection with these conservatives. Rabbinic tradition shows that the story of a woman who had been married to a succession of brothers was a stock *reductio ad absurdum* of this basic doctrine of the Pharisees. The resurrection was the only form in which belief in a life to come was held in Palestinian Judaism at this time. But it was a belief which was not taught in the law nor clearly in the prophets. Jesus appealed to God in his power to create new conditions of life where family complications would not be involved. He likewise appealed to a God who was a God of individual men. If he was "the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob," he was the God of individuals, a God of the living and not of the dead. In other words, Jesus made belief in the resurrection a corollary of his fundamental belief in God. God was a God for whom individuals were of value.

6. The Choice of the Cross

But the Sadducees opposed Jesus on other grounds than difference of opinion on theological matters. When Jesus led a popular protest against the selling of sacrificial animals in the outer court of the Temple and drove out the money-changers, he appeared as a dangerous leader of popular discontent. It was the chief priests who took the initiative in plotting the seizure of Jesus, and they were of Sadducean origin. The explanation of interference with economic profit, so popular in our own day, goes beyond any certain information. The most that can be said is that, from our knowledge of human nature, this is inherently plausible.

We may trace the events which led to the crucifixion of Jesus with some fullness but the historic causes can never be set forth adequately. For all of our evangelists, as for all early Christians, the death of Jesus was a divine necessity. It was not a defeat for the plan of God, but all of the time it had been a fixed part thereof.

Three times Mark gives exact predictions of the passion. He wanted to make clear that Jesus was not defeated in his purpose, for he had intended all along to die. The scene in Gethsemane shows clearly that this was theological interpretation. There we are shown a very human wrestling to accept the coming disaster as the will of God. There the possibility of death is still a bitter problem for Jesus. But the early Christian did not see the cause of the death of Jesus in Judas, or Caiaphas, or Pilate. Because of this, the human motivations can never be completely analyzed.

In a very real sense Jesus did choose to die. He might have stayed in retirement instructing his disciples on the wisdom of life. But not if he was to be true to the mission to which God had called him. He took the risk of bringing his revolutionary challenge to the leadership of his nation. When they turned a deaf ear to his appeal, the die was cast. It was only a question of when a favorable time would come for them to do away with him. It is most improbable that Jesus failed to see the rising storm of opposition. He would have been quite naïve if he did not realize that his days were numbered. But then what? Had God called him to this ministry only to watch him go down to defeat?

On the eve of the Passover, instead of withdrawing outside the city as had been his custom, Jesus met with his disciples in a supper which proved to be his last. Though Mark asserts that it was a Passover meal, the many contradictions in his account and the explicit statements of John prove that this was not the case. As the bread was distributed and the cup passed, Jesus repeated words which made ~~of the occasion~~ the starting point for the distinctive Christian act of worship. As he passed the cup, he assured his disciples that he would first drink it with them again in the banquet of the kingdom of God. As he broke the bread to distribute it to them, he said, "This is my body." In other words, as the bread was broken for them, so his body would be broken for them. All through his ministry he had spoken in parables; and now, as many prophets of old, he acted this parable in which his body was compared to the bread which he distributed for them. Finally, according to the tradition, he spoke of a new dispensation or covenant of God with men. This would be the kingdom of God, which his blood would inaugurate for them.

Naturally these words have come to us as they were formulated by the teaching of the early church. It is impossible to demonstrate with certainty just how much goes back to the historic teaching of Jesus himself. Jesus did not say that his death would make possible the forgiveness of sins, nor did he present any developed teaching about it. But if he saw the shadow looming ahead, there is no adequate reason to deny that he himself pointed toward it as his supreme service for men. Apparently, he suggested that in some way, not clearly indicated, rather than meaning the defeat of the purpose of God, it would bring his kingdom nearer to men. So the evangelist could write, "The Son of man came to give his life as a ransom for many."

7. The Trial and Crucifixion

Jesus was seized in a place called Gethsemane, on the Mount of Olives, where he had gone with his disciples to pray. Judas, one of the intimate group, knew the place and guided the Temple police to the scene. He had already promised to deliver Jesus up to the authorities. The resistance which a disciple foolishly undertook was immediately rebuked by Jesus. While the party was apparently armed for self-protection, Jesus would offer no resistance to legal arrest. All of the disciples fled except Peter, and he lost his courage soon after the discovery of his identity. After denying all knowledge of Jesus he fled in fear and remorse.

Hence, there were no friendly witnesses of what took place at the hearing before the high priest, and the church's information depended on later hearsay. Since it was not a formal trial, it is beside the point to list the many illegalities. The proceedings were more akin to a hearing before a grand jury. It was an informal consultation to formulate the charges to be brought before Pilate. Apparently a word about the destruction of the Temple figured in the hearing. Mark laid the emphasis on a charge of blasphemy. But if this had been the accusation, the Jews themselves could have inflicted the death penalty by stoning. Jesus may have anticipated that fate when he compared his body with bread that is broken. But Mark was interpreting "Son of God" in the Christian sense of a divine being, not in the Jewish sense of a "man chosen by God." The ultimate charge involved messiahship. Jesus was handed over to the Roman authorities on a political accusation.

Pilate heard the case early in the morning. Jesus maintained silence after his first refusal to deny that he was "king of the Jews." Like the servant in Isaiah, "When he was afflicted he opened not his mouth" (53:7). The evangelists heap all of the blame on the Jews, and show Pilate attempting by every possible device to release the prisoner. But this bias of our sources should not blind us to the fact that it was completely in the power of Pilate to release Jesus if he had had any serious doubt that he deserved death. The cruel Roman portrayed by Josephus was not a man to be particular about the life of one more Jewish peasant, or to be frightened by his wife's dreams. Even though the Jewish mob demanded amnesty for a robber named Barabbas rather than Jesus of Nazareth, there was still no reason why Pilate should condemn Jesus unless he was convinced that the situation demanded it. After a short hearing, he handed Jesus over to his soldiers to be scourged and crucified.

The crucifixion took place outside the city at Golgotha. There is nothing in our sources to indicate that it was a hill. Simon of Cyrene was impressed to carry the cross. Since the names of his sons were known to Mark he must have been associated with the later Christian movement. He and the women who watched from afar afforded "witnesses" from whom the details could be learned. Yet the passion story was influenced from the beginning by such passages as the twenty-second and the sixty-ninth Psalms. If Christ died "according to scripture," how could it be otherwise? Where memory was dim, prophecy could fill in details. But mocking and reproaches must have belonged to history as well as prophecy. Since some distribution of the garments had to be made, why may not the soldiers have cast lots, as the Psalm word had said?

Mark dates the crucifixion at nine o'clock in the morning. After Jesus had refused a narcotic drink, he was hung upon a cross and left to die of pain and exposure. The early tradition knew only one saying from the cross, the poignant words at the opening of the twenty-second Psalm, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is blasphemous to speculate on the meaning of these words to Jesus, or on other thoughts which may have passed through his mind during the dark hours until death cut short his suffering. There is no possible interpreter of that agony. It is not to be contemplated with curiosity but with awe and wonder. But of one thing we can be certain: neither Mark nor any other early Christian could have looked upon the repetition of scripture as a cry of despair. Jesus died with words of God upon his lips.

There were only a few hours before sundown when the sabbath would dawn and work could no longer be legally performed. But a devout man from Arimathea by the name of Joseph secured permission from Pilate to take the body down from the cross. Having purchased linen cloth (only one of the indications that this was not the first great day of the Passover), he hastily wrapped the body, and laid it away in a tomb, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary of Magdala and other women witnessed this from afar, but all of the male disciples of Jesus had fled.

Thus the brief ministry of Jesus came to an end. The road to Jerusalem had led not to triumph but to a tomb. Instead of the arrival of the completed kingdom of God, Pilate's executioners had completed their task. Some had "hoped that it was he who would redeem Israel," but apparently all had ended with defeat at Golgotha. So it appeared to all, as darkness closed upon that Friday evening, probably April 7, A.D. 30. If that had been all, it is unlikely that Jesus would ever have been heard of in later centuries, for during his lifetime his achievements appeared meager. But that was not all, for he who loses his life shall find it.

BIBLE READINGS

1. PREACHING IN GALILEE: Mark 1:16-39; 2:13-14; 3:13-19; 6:7-13; 10:17-22; Luke 9:57-62; 8:1-3.
2. RESULTS OF THE WORK: Mark 3:21, 31-35; 4:3-9; 6:1-6, 14-16, 32-44; Matt. 7:24-27; Luke 10:13-15; 13:31-33.
3. OUTSIDE GALILEE: Mark 7:24-30; Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 9:51-56; 10:1-2; 17:11-19.
4. THE MESSIANIC QUESTION: Mark 8:27-31; 9:2-10; 11:1-10, 27-33; 12:35-37; 14:55-62; 15:26; Luke 23:2-3.
5. JERUSALEM DAYS: John 7:2, 14; 10:22-23, 40; Mark 12:38-40; 12:13-27; Matt. 23:29-32, 37-39.
6. THE CHOICE OF THE CROSS: Mark 10:32-34, 45; 11:15-17; 14:12-28; 14:32-42; Luke 22:15-30; John 13:1.
7. THE TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION: Mark 14:1-2, 10-11, 43–15:47.

Part III

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH

CHAPTER IX

THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

THE historical life of Jesus ended with Good Friday. The Christian church was born when his disciples were convinced that this was not the end, but God had raised him from the dead. Without that belief, Jesus would have remained a forgotten Jewish teacher who had supposed that he would be the Messiah. Without that belief there never would have been a Christian church. Surely it is no exaggeration to say that belief in the resurrection of Jesus is the best-attested fact of ancient history.

1. THE RESURRECTION FAITH

The earliest account of that belief is to be found in Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth. It was not only the message which he had delivered to them, but the tradition which he himself had received. No other record approaches that in antiquity or reliability. Paul affirmed that Christ was raised on the third day according to scripture. He has nothing to say of the discovery of an empty tomb on the third day. Nor does he state when the first appearances of the risen Christ took place. It was from scripture that the event was dated on the third day. Paul proclaimed the *fact,* not the surrounding circumstances.

Christ appeared first to Cephas. None of our gospels recounts that appearance though it shimmers through in Luke. The disciples report to Cleopas that the Lord had appeared to Simon. Luke also recorded a prayer of Jesus for Simon, "I have prayed for you that your faith fail not. . . . . But when you have turned again, establish the faith of your brethren." That "turning again" of Peter was the foundation experience. No wonder that later tradition could speak of Peter as the rock on which the church was built! First to him had come an appearance of the risen Christ, and the church was truly built on that faith.

Paul went on to enumerate the further appearances—to the Twelve, to more than five hundred brethren, to James, to all the apostles, and last of all to Paul himself. These take us well past the beginnings of the church, and we may turn to the gospels for corroboration of these. But from their conflicting testimony we can see that there never was a uniform story of the resurrection as there was of the trial and crucifixion. That God had raised Christ from the dead was not a narrative to be told but a proclamation to be preached.

Mark, the earliest evangelist, preserves no record of appearances. The women who came early Sunday morning to anoint the body of Jesus ran away with fear after a young man said to them, "He is not here; he is risen; behold the place where they laid him." It is unlikely that the gospel ended at this point, but the original conclusion is lost; the rest of Mark, as printed in the King James version, was added in the second century. Matthew developed his story from the word, "Behold, he goes before you into Galilee." He told how the risen Christ appeared to the disciples on a mountain in Galilee and commissioned them for their apostolic service. Luke, on the other hand, reported that Jesus appeared to his disciples while they were assembled in Jerusalem. He not only instructed and commissioned them, but commanded them not to leave Jerusalem until they received "the promise of my Father." John combined these two competing traditions, recounting appearances in Jerusalem in chapter twenty, and appearances in Galilee in the supplementary chapter twenty-one.

The problem of the historian is to reconstruct the movements of the disciples between the time of their ignominious flight and their open preaching in Jerusalem. The problem of the student of religion is to consider the nature of the experiences of the disciples and the value of the spiritual event. The two questions must not be confused; the first is exclusively in the realm of fact, but the other must essentially rest back upon religious faith. We shall turn first to the question of the movements of the disciples.

The view adopted on the location of the first appearances depends upon the comparative value assigned to the Lukan-

Johannine tradition and the Markan-Matthean. Paul gives no hint as to where Cephas was when the risen Christ appeared to him. According to the Lukan view, the disciples never got more than a day's journey from Jerusalem. While at some time they must have returned to Galilee to secure the belongings which they had not taken with them on their Passover pilgrimage, that was incidental. The transformng experience took place before they left Jerusalem. Adherents of the other point of view ask how the story of the flight to Galilee arose if it did not rest upon fact. Since the later developments did take place in Jerusalem, it was easy to forget those few days a generation later; but the first appearances took place in Galilee. This seems to me to be the most likely reconstruction.

The disciples returned to their homes in Galilee. It may have been nearly a week after the crucifixion before the experience came to Peter. It was probably as he fished on the familiar lake of Galilee that the risen Christ called him to fish for men. He reassembled the disciples and they were confirmed in the belief that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Though the resurrection of Jesus was looked on as a single event, the appearances were repeated to various individuals. They returned to Jerusalem to wait for his coming in power.

But the most important question remains. What actually happened? Our gospel stories reflect the later debates between Jews and Christians. They also indicate the difficulty of conveying to sense-bound men the reality of an event which was not in the world of sense experience. The world has always been full of men and women to whom nothing is real that cannot be touched or handled. It is to be remembered that there were no eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. No canonical gospel presumed to describe Jesus emerging from the tomb. The mere fact that a tomb was found to be empty was capable of many explanations. The very last one that would be credible to a modern man would be the explanation of a physical resurrection of the body. Such a claim clearly did not convince most of the Jews, who insisted that the body had been stolen. But this discussion is quite beside the point. *The early Christians did not believe in the resurrection of Christ because they could not find his dead body. They believed because they did find a living Christ.* The resurrection of Jesus did not mean the reanimation of a corpse for a brief continuation of fellowship with his friends. It meant that the new age of God had already begun. God's Messiah had been raised from the dead as the opening event in the drama of salvation.

We should take our point of departure from Paul. The reality of the resurrection of Jesus was fundamental for him. He insisted that if it were not true, all of his teaching was in vain. He knew it to be true not only because of the convincing testimony of others but because Christ had appeared to him. He drew no distinction between these appearances; and he argued at length that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." The body that is raised is not the body that is laid away, but a "spiritual body" of an entirely different order. In other words, Paul was not talking about an event which could be photographed by eyewitnesses, but an event in the world of spiritual perception. It was a vision of another kind of reality. It was not to be demonstrated by appeal to graves that were empty. It was a proclamation that must appeal to religious faith.

May not the early Christians have been mistaken? In the very nature of the case there is no possibility of demonstrating the truth or falsity of their belief. Of the sincerity of their conviction that Christ had been raised from the dead there can be no doubt. Inevitably they expressed their experience in terms of their first-century world view. They had believed in a life to come in terms of resurrection rather than immortality. Therefore it was inevitable that the conviction that Jesus was alive and exalted to the right hand of God presupposed for them that he must have been raised from the dead. We live in a very different mental world. In evaluating their testimony we must be clear about the essential nature of their belief. It was not that this one man enjoyed a continuation of life after death, which gave assurance that others might survive death. Rather, *God had vindicated his Messiah,* Jesus, by raising him from the dead and exalting him to the place of pre-eminence. The verdict of Pilate had been set aside at the judgment seat of God. The new world was beginning because God had turned the defeat of his Anointed into triumph.

No one in the twentieth century is in a position to demonstrate that Peter and the other early Christians saw only a "subjective" vision, or to prove the external "cause" of their experience. But such psychological questions are quite subordinate to the "truth" of the resurrection of Jesus. *Did God vindicate this one who had been rejected by men? Did he place his seal upon Jesus as the revelation of his power and his grace?* That is the ultimate question, and it is a question upon which the historian as historian is incapable of speaking. He can speak only as a believer or unbeliever. In the first century the risen Christ appeared only to faith. It cannot be different in the twentieth century. All that the historian can do is to assemble the evidence upon which that faith must be based; but I, for one, would affirm the truth of that faith.

2. Beginnings at Jerusalem

For the story of the beginnings of the church we have no other direct source than the Acts of the Apostles. The reader must be referred to the standard introductions for a full discussion of authorship, date, and sources of this our only history of the period. The author was a gentile Christian who did the best he could some time between 85-95 to piece together from the available sources the story of the beginnings of the church. We shall refer to him as Luke without intending a judgment on whether the companion of Paul was actually the final author of the book. Though the political apologetic is very clear, the shortcomings of the book are much more due to inadequacies in the author's information than to any deliberate perversion of history.

His limitations are seen at the very outset, for he started off his account with the mistaken assumption that the disciples never left Jerusalem after the crucifixion. Luke terminated the appearances of the risen Christ by an "ascension" on the fortieth day. But it is clear from Paul and other early Christians that this view was by no means universal. In any case, within the first month after the crucifixion a group of more than one hundred followers of Jesus reassembled in Jerusalem. They did not engage in preaching, but spent their days in private prayer and in attendance upon the Temple. The promise of the Father which they were expecting was doubtless the kingdom of God. Since the twelve disciples were to rule under Christ at that time, the place of Judas was filled by holy lot, the choice falling upon Matthias.

It has generally been assumed that there was no continuation in Galilee. But that is based on Luke, and it is clear from his gospel that he minimized Galilee and the north and emphasized Jerusalem and Samaria. It is inherently probable that some followers of Jesus remained in Galilee. It is difficult to believe that none of those who had heard Jesus preach in the Galilean synagogues joined the Christian movement except the group which moved to Jerusalem. Some hold that the Gospel of Mark reflects the belief that Jesus would return to Galilee to set up his kingdom there rather than in Jerusalem. These believe that there were quite separate Christian groups in these two centers. While that possibility cannot be denied, all of the personalities known to us are associated with Jerusalem. Peter and the rest of the Twelve, and James the brother of Jesus, had originally lived in Gililee; but they soon became the leaders at Jerusalem. Later we shall consider possible developments from beginnings in Galilee. But if such existed, we have no direct information about them. This fact is a reminder that the church did not arise directly from the preaching of Jesus. It arose from the proclamation that God had raised him from the dead.

The period of waiting lasted less than two months. Then we find Peter and the other disciples publicly proclaiming their message. Two incidents are reported in the Acts of the Apostles which brought the group into the public eye. According to one of these, Peter and John healed a lame man in the Temple through the wonder-working power of the name of Jesus. This drew a crowd to whom Peter explained the miracle in a stirring sermon. The other version is located on the feast of Pentecost, which probably was celebrated as the anniversary of the giving of the law. We are told that the Spirit of God seized the group and inspired them "to speak with other tongues." From the huge crowd that was drawn, one must conclude that the disciples were in the Temple, for that was the only place in Jerusalem where such a throng could congregate.

Luke interpreted the event as a miracle of speaking in foreign languages. But since many in the crowd thought that the disciples were drunk, it is much more probable that this "speaking with tongues" was the same as that found elsewhere in apostolic Christianity, and which has reappeared in other intensely emotional revivals of religion. This is uncontrolled speech that appears to be of supernatural origin, for it is unintelligible even to the speaker.

It is a rush of inarticulate sounds not directed by the mind of the speaker.

In any case, Luke saw a symbolic significance in the story which led him to make it the introduction to his second book. Men of all nations were drawn by the power of the Spirit and heard in their own language the good news of God. The spread of the gospel to all peoples was prefigured, as Peter's stirring words came to men from Parthia on the east to Rome on the west, from Pontus on the north to Egypt on the south.

Pentecost has traditionally been viewed as the great day in the history of the Christian church. But this reputation depends solely upon Luke. Paul may have the same event in mind when he speaks of a resurrection appearance to "more than five hundred brethren at once." According to the Gospel of John, Jesus bestowed the gift of the Holy Spirit on the night of the resurrection, not first after fifty days. But in any case, Luke's story of Pentecost brings together two primary facts. The ecstatic behavior of the disciples was interpreted as the outpouring of the Spirit which had been promised for the messianic time. Though Jesus had not yet returned in power, they were already endowed with the Spirit which was to be given "in the last days." Likewise, the disciples turn from their waiting in quiet expectancy to the preaching of the message which the Spirit inspired within them.

3. The Apostolic Message

What was their message? Naturally no stenographic reports were ever taken down. Long before the traditions which came to Luke were formulated, some development must have taken place. Yet the sermons recorded in the Acts of the Apostles appear to offer a relatively primitive version of the Christian gospel. Naturally they are only summaries which we must fill in from the traditions formulated in the gospels.

In his first sermon Peter announced: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God for you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised him up." While Jesus was the center of the preaching, the focus of interest was not upon biographical information or a repetition of the teaching of Jesus. These were not entirely forgotten, but according to the apostolic message the central facts of salvation were found in his death and his resurrection, by which God had confirmed Jesus as his Messiah. It is striking that Peter did not appeal to the empty tomb to prove the resurrection. As with Paul, proof was from scripture, and from the fact that Christ had appeared to chosen witnesses.

When we turn to the other early sermons in Acts and to the letters of Paul, we find a very similar pattern in the apostolic preaching. First there was emphasis on fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. Sometimes there was stress on his Davidic sonship, sometimes there was emphasis upon the testimony of John the Baptist, sometimes there were summary accounts of the preaching and healing by Jesus. But always there was emphasis on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and his exaltation to heaven, from where he would soon come in judgment. Paul has much more to say about the saving significance of the death of Jesus. It is unlikely that this idea originated with him; from the very beginning believers had to face the question of why in the plan of God his Messiah must suffer and die. Though they found the passion predicted in scripture, there was need to offer an answer concerning its purpose.

After the presentation of the good news of God's act for them, the listeners were exhorted to repent. They were to repent first of all of having delivered up God's Messiah to be crucified. Then they must repent of their other sins, for "the time of the restoration of all things" was at hand. Likewise they were to accept baptism in the name of Jesus.

Many have thought that Luke was guilty of an anachronism in placing the rite of baptism so early. The origin of Christian baptism is lost in the mist of uncertainty. Certainly it was taken over from the movement of John the Baptist with which early Christianity was so closely associated. Though Jesus accepted baptism at the hand of John, he did not baptize others during his ministry. The Christian church ascribed their practice of baptism to a command of the "risen Christ." But that does not tell us how soon after the crucifixion they were led to the use of that rite.

We later hear of "disciples" who did not know any baptism in the name of Jesus (Acts 19:1-6). This would indicate that the practice was not at first universal. In many places in the New Testament, baptism by water and by the Spirit seem to be contrasted. It may be that the first Christian baptism was a baptism of the Spirit only, which followed confession of the name of Jesus. Later, this was joined to the practice of water baptism. But such theories are necessarily conjectural. Throughout the apostolic church, baptism was in the name of Jesus rather than according to a Trinitarian formula. Believers were placed under the protection of Jesus by baptism in his name; demons were driven out by the same powerful name.

We are told that great crowds believed on the apostles' teaching. We should realize just what was involved at that time. It did not mean that three thousand bad men were at once converted into good men. We may assume that most had been devout Jews. Nor did it mean that they repudiated their old religion for a new one. Peter and the others did not think of themselves as anything but loyal Jews. But they knew the name of God's Messiah; the decisive event had already taken place; and God's ultimate salvation was soon to come. Hence, they must repent of the rejection of God's Anointed. These beliefs did not mean a lessening of their devotion to the religious institutions of Judaism. They attended the Temple sacrifices more zealously than before and preached their message in the synagogues of the city.

Luke says that these believers continued steadfastly in four things: "In the apostles' teaching, in sharing, in the breaking of bread, and the prayers." We have already sketched the main points of the apostles' message and noted the faithful participation of these Galileans and their converts in the Temple services and private prayers. The other two aspects will call for more extended comment.

4. The Sharing

The Greek word *koinōnia* is often translated "fellowship." It is more accurate to render it by "sharing." The first believers had all things in common. They shared, first of all, in spiritual blessings. They participated together in the Holy Spirit, and soon they would participate in the kingdom of God. They were united by joy and gladness and a spirit of love that knew no bounds. It did not stop until it included sharing in material as well as spiritual goods.

It is a great mistake to speak of the communism of the Jerusalem community. "Communism" involves communal production as well as pooled consumption. But there was nothing of the kind among the early Christians. Their practice went back to the experiences of the disciples with Jesus. Naturally they had had a common purse as they traveled together. After his death and their return to Jerusalem what could be more natural than a continuation of this brotherhood? Fishermen like Peter could hardly find work in a city like Jerusalem. Many others who had come down from Galilee now had no regular means of livelihood. Since Christ was soon to return in glory, there was neither time nor occasion to develop a permanent economic regime. Those who had possessions sold them and distribution was made under the direction of "the apostles" as each had need. A new and intense bond of love bound the group together. Anxious care did not belong in the kingdom of God, and should not exist in the lives of those dedicated to its coming. Such had been the teaching of their Master. They made that practical by a common sharing of responsibility for what was needful.

Despite Luke's generalizations, it is clear from his story that the practice was wholly voluntary. There was no legal machinery for enforcement; nor was any communal production carried on. They were living upon their joint capital as they waited for the coming of the new age into which no one could take his earthly treasures. Luke records the generous example of Barnabas, who sold a piece of property and brought the proceeds for distribution to the needy. In marked contrast stood the act of Ananias and Sapphira. They wanted the reputation for generosity and still to keep some of the money for themselves. A divine judgment upon such hypocrisy was seen in their sudden deaths. The words of Peter show clearly that their sin did not lie in retaining some of their property, but in pretending to have given it all. In other words, there never was a strictly communistic organization of the group. Love led them to share with each other in a spirit of intense brotherhood.

Some interpreters have pointed to the failure of this "communistic experiment," and have claimed that it was never attempted in the gentile churches. This involves a radical misunderstanding of the situation. As time went on and the end did not come, all capable of work had to seek a means of livelihood. But in no part of the church did Christians fail to recognize a responsibility to care for their own needy. Worship and charity were inseparable in the early church. It is largely "wishful thinking" that finds in these exuberant expressions of brotherhood in the first days the need for the later collections sent to the "poor among the saints at Jerusalem." "The poor" was fully as much a religious term as an economic. These offerings were a recognition of the pre-eminence of the church at Jerusalem. The value of a communistic system of production cannot be discussed in relation to early Christianity, for it did not exist even in Jerusalem. What was found there was complete sharing out of a new-found love. And this extended wherever the message of Jesus was carried.

5. The Breaking of Bread

The "breaking of bread" was the distinctive act of worship of the first believers. It was a continuation of the table fellowship which the original disciples had enjoyed with Jesus. Though he was no longer with them in the flesh, they could celebrate together the simple meal at which he had once presided in person. It was a meal which brought back memories of the times when he had broken the bread to distribute to them. Especially they would recall the Last Supper "on the night in which he was betrayed." But the spirit in which they partook of the meal was not one of sadness or sorrow. "They broke bread with gladness and singleness of heart." Their eyes were fixed on the banquet of the kingdom of God. Jesus had promised to drink with them anew at that time. Perhaps he would return at some celebration of the "breaking of bread."

It is striking how many of the resurrection appearances of Jesus are associated with food. John records that the risen Christ distributed the bread and fish to the disciples by the Sea of Galilee. Luke has the most beautiful story of all. A presence walked with two disciples to Emmaus. At supper the stranger took the position as host, pronounced the blessing, and broke the bread. In the familiar gesture of the breaking of bread, the risen Christ was recognized, but only to vanish from their sight. The name for the meal, as well as these stories, shows that the bread and not the cup occupied the central place. In the development of the Christian eucharist, the position and significance of the cup was to vary greatly.

"The breaking of bread" was of course a genuine meal. There must have been various house groups which celebrated together. Table prayers accompanied the meal as with all Jewish meals. But we cannot tell from our meager sources of information whether it was accompanied at this time by other liturgical features. It is highly probable that the Pauline emphasis on a memorial of the Last Supper was not stressed in the Jerusalem celebration. Their gaze was not backward to that meal, but forward to the banquet of the kingdom of God. Paul's interpretation was associated with his emphasis on the death of Christ. The Acts of the Apostles makes the resurrection central. If some uncertainty must surround the full meaning attached to the meal, there is no doubt about its place in the life of the community. It cemented the fellowship of love because the poor of the community could eat from their common provision. In the gospel feeding stories, a basket of fragments is left over for each of the administrants. These were to be taken for the feeding of the poor. Thus worship and charity were inseparable within this new fellowship.

6. The First Opposition

Luke emphasized how popular these Nazarenes were with the people. They could be indulgent toward the unusual beliefs because of the enthusiastic devotion shown by this new sect. At first, only the high priestly party is represented as antagonistic. It was hardly because as Sadducees they disbelieved in the resurrection of the dead. As the political leaders of the people, they feared that the movement was full of dangerous possibilities.

Peter and his companion were arrested for performing a healing through an unrecognized "name." We are told that on the first offense he was let off with a warning. When they refused to stop preaching in this name, they were given a beating. Luke employed these traditions to show the heroic defiance of Peter, boldly accusing the Sanhedrin of the murder of God's Anointed, and insisting that they must obey God rather than men. Of course the Sanhedrin had no doubt that their commands were at the same time the will of God. Yet it is clear that these threats represented no serious attempt to stamp out the movement, for "every day, in the Temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ."

Luke has drawn a very idyllic picture of these early days. It is of a group which interprets its joyful enthusiasm as evidence that the Spirit of God, promised for the last days, had already come. In their prophetic utterances, they assert that Jesus is alive; God has vindicated his Messiah by raising him from the dead; soon he will appear in judgment. They share in common experiences and a common hope. They also share in a common meal, which binds them more closely to the one who had broken bread on earth, and who would soon drink with them anew in the kingdom of God. And they share together the necessities of life out of the love which this Jesus had awakened within them. Possibly Luke looked back on those days through glasses of too rosy a hue. But since his story is the only information we possess, we can only follow his leading toward the firmer, less ideal, ground of later history.

BIBLE READINGS

1. THE RESURRECTION FAITH: I Cor. 15:3-8, 12-20, 42-44, 50; Mark 16:1-8; Matt. 28:11-20; Luke 22:31-32; 24:36-40; John 20:19-29.
2. BEGINNINGS AT JERUSALEM: Acts 1:1–2:13; 3:1-11.
3. THE APOSTOLIC MESSAGE: Acts 2:14-41; 3:12-26; 10:36-43.
4. THE SHARING: Acts 2:42-47; 4:32–5:11.
5. THE BREAKING OF BREAD: Luke 24:13-32; John 21:1-13.
6. THE FIRST OPPOSITION: Acts 4:1-21; 5:17-18, 27-32, 40-42.

CHAPTER X

WIDENING HORIZONS OF FAITH

The Christian movement spread from Jerusalem as its center. Luke traced that story according to an outline contained in the promise of the risen Christ: "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." The beginnings in Jerusalem have been traced in the preceding chapter. The mission in Judea is nowhere specifically described. Since Paul refers twice to the churches in Judea, their existence from an early date is confirmed. Instead of telling of this work, Luke turned to the story of the first division among the followers of Jesus.

1. The Rise of the Hellenists

Without any preparation we suddenly meet with Hellenists who were dissatisfied because their widows were neglected in the administration of the tables. Were these proselytes or Hellenistic Jews permanently resident in Jerusalem? Or, was this a party name for those more open to Greek influences? It may be that ever since Pentecost the church had not been confined to natives of Palestine. But the exact complexion of the group is as uncertain as the length of time which had elapsed since the crucifixion.

Since Luke assigned the leadership of the whole community to the twelve apostles, it was they who called together the company to consider the complaint. Seven men were chosen to take over the work of "serving tables" in order to leave the apostles free for the preaching of the word. From the names of the seven it is clear that all were Hellenists. What an amazing way to correct possible discrimination against their widows by selecting a charity board composed exclusively of Hellenists! Furthermore, after election we hear nothing of their "serving tables." Instead, Stephen and the others appear as flaming preachers of a more radical message. When this brought on a serious persecution which drove them out of the city, the original apostles were left unmolested. Apparently the opponents knew how to distinguish between these two groups.

It is clear that conditions were not nearly as harmonious as Luke presents them. Quite early, the Greek-speaking believers (Hellenists) developed their own leadership, seven men headed by Stephen and Philip. It is striking that after the feeding of the multitude which Mark located on gentile soil, seven baskets of fragments were collected. Twelve baskets were gathered up after the feeding on Jewish soil. The distinction between the twelve and the seven was not one based on a difference in the functions which they performed. Peter, John, and the other ten were leaders of the Aramaic-speaking community; Stephen, Philip, and the other five were leaders of the Greek-speaking community.

It was among the Hellenists that the more radical aspects of the career of Jesus received emphasis. Since the members of the Greek-speaking synagogues could not refute "the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke," serious charges were placed against Stephen before the Sanhedrin. It was asserted that he had spoken blasphemous words against Moses by saying that Jesus would change the customs which had been delivered; according to a further charge he had claimed that Jesus would destroy the Temple. Here are points which Peter had apparently not stressed. But Stephen remembered the critical attitudes of Jesus toward the law, which have been described in Chapter VI. He recalled that Jesus had predicted the destruction of the Temple, when "there shall not be left here one stone upon another" (Mark 13:2). Here were issues which involved more than minor disturbances of public order from enthusiastic sectaries. Here was a possible threat to the very foundations of Jewish religion.

Luke follows with a long speech which is represented as Stephen's defense. It is in no sense a denial of the charges, nor does it at first glance appear to deal with them very directly. Hence many have looked upon it simply as a sample of early Christian preaching which was inserted at this point. But there is much to be said for the belief that it represents substantially what Stephen said on this and other occasions. He would not have tried to hide his faith, but would have welcomed the opportunity to proclaim his convictions with defiance.

Three motifs are developed in the defense. First, the great revelations of God had not taken place in the Temple but outside Palestine. Abraham had been called in Mesopotamia. God had favored Joseph and Moses in Egypt. The law had been given on Mount Sinai. The tabernacle was erected in the wilderness. Stephen cited a prophetic word indicating that sacrifices were not offered at that time. The historic survey ended with Solomon, "who built God a house." This led Stephen to quote the one passage in the Old Testament which was most critical of a temple to house the God who had created all things. The second motif is that the children of Israel had always been rebellious. Joseph had been sold into Egypt; Moses had been denied; all of the prophets had been rejected, and persecuted, and killed. In the third place, Moses had predicted that a prophet would arise like himself. When he came, he too had been betrayed and murdered. It should be clear from this outline that Stephen was more critical of the Temple than of the law, even though he described the latter as "ordained by angels." But on both points his words sounded blasphemous in the ears of the religious leaders.

No formal condemnation is reported and it is not clear whether Stephen's death was due to mob action or followed a legal trial. Stoning was the regular form for Jews to inflict the death penalty. The clothes of the condemned would be removed, he would be thrown over a cliff, and the witnesses were to roll the first stones down upon him if he was not killed by the fall. Stephen died, calling in prayer upon the heavenly Son of man, and asking forgiveness for his murderers. We are told that Saul, who would have heard Stephen in the synagogue of Cilicia and Asia, stood by consenting to his death, and that he took a leading part in the subsequent persecution. This drove the Hellenists out of the city and scattered them abroad through Judea and Samaria.

2. The Gospel in Samaria

Up to this time no apostle had acted as if he had received any commission to carry the good news outside Jerusalem. They had all stayed within the shadow of the Temple. It was through the grim hand of persecution that the early church was first led out into wider fields. Philip was now the leader of the Hellenistic group. One Philip was included among the Twelve, but this was understood to be another. Yet it is striking that the Fourth Gospel tells of Greeks who came to the apostle Philip seeking "to see Jesus" (12:21 ff.). Philip went first to Samaria, and there continued his work of healing and preaching. He is said to have attracted great attention and led many to seek baptism.

Another version of the beginnings in Samaria may be traced in the fourth chapter of the Gospel of John. There Samaria is portrayed as a "field white unto the harvest," in which the laborers who enter find many who believe. John emphasized that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans and despised the worship which centered on Mount Gerizim. In the eyes of orthodox Jews, Samaritans did not belong to the faithful. But Philip and his fellow missionaries did not hesitate to preach the gospel of Jesus to them. Not all of the early Christians accepted this development, as is clear from Matthew 10:5, "Enter not into any city of the Samaritans." But Luke found many traditions favorable to the Samaritan mission.

Luke inserted another missionary adventure of Philip at this point. He met an Ethiopian eunuch along the coastal highway. Since this important official had been to Jerusalem to worship, he was clearly a believer in the Jewish God. He was reading from the scriptures as his chariot rolled along. According to the law, a eunuch could not become a full proselyte, though some exceptions have been known. It was this situation which made the incident so important. Philip interpreted the passage from Isaiah as referring to Jesus. He did not hesitate to baptize the eunuch, "who went on his way rejoicing." In other words, this man who was ineligible under the law to become a part of the people of God was baptized in the name of Jesus. Philip himself came to Caesarea, the capital of the province, and apparently made that his home and the center of his ministry. Twenty years later, Paul found him there. His virgin daughters became famous in the churches of Asia Minor a generation later.

3. THE ROAD TO ANTIOCH

Others of the Hellenists went in different directions. Some located at Damascus, where Paul's persecuting activity brought him. A document has been found from a sect group at Damascus which stressed the idea of "covenant." It may be that Damascus was a center of unorthodox Jewish groups and thus attracted some of the Nazarene missionaries at an early date. Other Hellenists traveled through Phoenicia to the island of Cyprus, and came to Antioch. In a short time Samaria, Galilee, and much of Syria had been traversed by the missionaries.

Antioch, the former capital of the Seleucid Empire, was now the capital of the Roman province of Syria and the third city of the Mediterranean world. It was filled with famous theaters and countless statues; fountains and temples decorated its thoroughfares. The main street was paved with marble and stretched for four and a half miles, with a central passage for horse traffic and a covered colonnade for foot passengers. This metropolis had long contained a large Jewish community which enjoyed a considerable amount of self-government. Here the tension with the gentile population was not as great as in more turbulent Alexandria, or even in Rome. Antioch was destined to become the second birthplace of Christianity.

Luke possessed a valuable tradition about the beginnings of the church in Antioch. We read that "certain men of Cyprus and Cyrene" took a very adventurous step. They preached to Greeks as well as to Hellenist Jews. Lucius was one of the men of Cyrene, but no names of Christians of Cyprus are mentioned except that of Barnabas. Luke believed that Barnabas had been sent up from Jerusalem to take charge of the new developments. But from this time on he appears as the leading representative of the church at Antioch, even in its dealings with Jerusalem. The historian cannot help wondering if Barnabas was not one of the men of Cyprus who had participated in the founding of the church at Antioch. Naturally this is a conjecture which is incapable of proof. Barnabas soon sent for Paul to help him in the work at Antioch. We shall continue that story when we follow the fortunes of this greatest missionary to the Gentiles.

By his anecdotal method, Luke has indicated the widening horizons of faith. The company of those who believed on Jesus has spread far and wide. They have come to include groups from outside orthodox Judaism, and some which were not eligible to become full proselytes. It has reached the gentile world. In addition to the Hellenist dispersion from Jerusalem, there may also have been developments from Galilee. Certainly there were churches there, and we must not permit Luke's preoccupation with Jerusalem to lead us to forget such probable developments simply because no record remains. This progress has likewise involved a development of the message. In later chapters we shall see what moral standards were inculcated, and how Jesus was presented to the various groups. Here we shall deal with the early missionary methods, and with the concept of the church which bound together these scattered fellowships with a tie that was stronger than any organizational bond.

4. Missionary Methods

The missionaries followed the same general procedure as on the tour which the disciples had taken during the lifetime of Jesus. Usually they went in pairs. We see Peter and John, Barnabas and Saul, Paul and Silas, and other teams take the road together. They were not to burden themselves with extra clothing or heavy equipment. They were to take no money, nor a begging bowl to solicit contributions. They could expect to be entertained where they went, for "the laborer is worthy of his hire." On arriving at a town, they should seek out the house of a worthy man; if received they should stay there. Ordinarily at least they should not move from house to house, but stay until they left that town. According to the instructions included in the gospels, they should eat what was set before them. How we would like to know how early that principle was accepted by the itinerant missionaries! The Jewish food laws were early to become a difficulty in intercourse between Jewish and gentile members of the community. How soon did these scruples begin to break down, especially among the Hellenist missionaries?

Their work included healing as well as preaching. To the message of the kingdom of God was now added belief in the messiahship of Jesus. He was the heavenly Lord who would soon come in judgment and redemption. Since they were his representatives, whoever received them, received him. They had the promise that though they would be delivered up to local councils and scourged in the synagogues, God's Spirit would defend them when they were brought before the bar of judgment. The popularity which Luke portrayed for Jerusalem was clearly not their fate. They must expect to be hated by all men. Paul compared the later sufferings of the church at Thessalonica with what "the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus" had suffered from the Jews. When the missionaries were driven out of one town, they would shake its dust off their feet as a curse upon it and move on to the next. But no opposition could quench their burning zeal. The Holy Spirit would stand by them and defend them. God's salvation had come. They were the heralds of his Anointed.

5. The Concept of the Church

Thus far we have avoided wherever possible the use of the phrase "Christian church," for it is an anachronism for the earliest period. Luke tells us that "the disciples" were first called Christians at Antioch. To themselves they were "the brethren," "the saints," or "those of the Way." To the Jews they were "the sect of the Nazarenes." Apparently it was from Gentiles that they received the name of *Christianoi*. The name is found in the New Testament only in the Acts of the Apostles and First Peter; it did not come into common use until the second century. Hence it probably originated long after the foundation of the church in Antioch. It is instructive that this designation was built not on the name of Jesus, but on one of his early titles. The brethren were not the followers of the man Jesus, but believers in the Christ. Probably the name stuck for still another reason. The Greek word sounded much the same as *chrestianoi,* which meant "the good ones." Originally the name probably carried the sneering judgment, "the goody-goodies."

The term "church" is first used by Luke in Acts 5:11. The Greek word *ekklesia* might refer to any kind of assembly. Its peculiar religious coloring came from its adoption by most of the Septuagint translators for the Hebrew word *Qahal,* which meant the congregation or people of God. The fundamental idea of the "church" therefore was not a religious organization or institution, but the whole company of the faithful. This idea of the people of God was closely related to that of the kingdom of God. Though God's kingship might not yet be complete over the whole world, among the people who had been called out by him, God's sovereignty was recognized.

Jews naturally assumed that "the church" was confined to Israel, or at least to that remnant of Israel who were faithful, and to those Gentiles who accepted God's covenant of circumcision. The emergence of the Christian church involved the transference of all the Jewish ideas of the congregation or people of God to those who believed in Jesus as Messiah. At first this meant the Jews who acknowledged the name of Jesus as Messiah. Ultimately, as we shall see, the church included all who accepted him, even uncircumcised Gentiles. This transfer is epitomized by the saying in Matthew, "The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it" (Matt. 21:43). Just when the Christians took to themselves this holy name for the people of God we cannot tell, but it was long before Paul wrote his first letter.

It is entirely possible that Jesus may have used some Aramaic equivalent of *ekklesia* in reference to his disciples. We must not think of "church" and "kingdom of God" as antithetical. Those who repented in order that they might enter the kingdom of God were the church, whether Jesus actually used that term or not. But he did not organize a separate cult group. Jesus and his disciples worshiped in the synagogue and Temple. Matthew is the only gospel to use the word "church" and here we clearly have the terminology of a later time. Matthew speaks of a separate community which is responsible for the discipline of its members. Here is the church of Christ, "my church," over against a Judaism which still looks upon itself as the people of God. Jesus himself never forsook Judaism, but wherever he found the people of God, that was the church.

It should be clear from this background that "church" did not stand first of all for a group having an organized religious life in a local community. The primary thought was of the collective people of God; from these there were groups in various localities. They were not "cults of Jesus" which worshiped him instead of some other cult deity. Rather, they were God's people of the new covenant, the fellow-heirs of the coming salvation. Institutional forms inevitably came later, but at first the church was definitely a religious conception, and as such was an integral part of their faith. There could not be more than one church any more than there could be more than one God or one Christ. It was not an institution that Jesus had founded, for the people of God had always existed. Jesus was rather the one who had redeemed the church.

Luke assumes that the apostles were the leaders of the Christian church from the outset. All of our gospels except Mark end with the commissioning of the apostles by the risen Lord. This theory was first definitely formulated in the document emanating from Rome which is known as First Clement, a book which was probably written only a little later than the Acts of the Apostles. But did the apostles hold such a place of undisputed leadership as Luke portrays? Very soon, at least, the leadership at Jerusalem came into the hands of James, the brother of Jesus, and a body of elders. These were the Council with authority over the Christian church analogous to the Sanhedrin, which was the ruling body of the Jews. If the apostles originally acted as the vicegerents of Christ on earth, they clearly did not maintain this position very long. The development of the organization of the local churches belongs to a much later stage in our story.

But one question does remain: how was a sense of unity maintained among those communities which looked to Jesus as God's redeemer of his people? The Acts of the Apostles assumes that the mother church at Jerusalem exercised a supervision over the development of the church. When Philip converted many in Samaria, "the apostles" sent Peter and John to oversee the work. Those who had been baptized received the Holy Spirit only after the apostles had laid their hands upon them. Again, when the report of the developments at Antioch came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to take charge. It seems to be clear from these illustrations that Luke considered that all Christians were branches of the mother church in Jerusalem. We shall see that, as crucial issues arose, the disputants brought their problems to Jerusalem for decision. Here were to be found the chief custodians of the tradition.

It is difficult to say how far Luke has gone in reading back later theories into his story of Christian beginnings, and to what extent this corresponded to the facts. Our only other early source of information is Paul, and he shows a surprising deference to the position of Jerusalem for one who insisted that he was dependent upon no human authorities. It is difficult to deny that the leadership of the Jerusalem community was paramount during the first generation. This was doubtless an important factor in maintaining a sense of oneness among the scattered communities which had so little in the way of fixed organization. But it is very doubtful that Spirit-filled believers, pulsating with new religious enthusiasms, always waited for authorization from the Jerusalem elders or a college of apostles. The sense of oneness among the Christian brethren rested not in formal ecclesiastical ties, but in the fact that they belonged to the people of God who would inherit his kingdom.

BIBLE READINGS

1. The Rise of the Hellenists: Acts 6:1–8:3.
2. The Gospel in Samaria: Acts 8:4-13, 26-40; John 4:30-42.
3. The Road to Antioch: Acts 9:1-2; 11:19-26.
4. Missionary Methods: Matt. 10:5-23, 40-41.
5. The Concept of the Church: Acts 8:14-24; Matt. 16:17-19.

CHAPTER XI

THE CONVERSION OF PAUL

The most important single figure in the development of the early church was Saul of Tarsus. Because of the preservation of many of his letters, he is one of the best-known characters of the ancient world. He was the hero of the author of Luke-Acts and his missionary campaigns are the only ones which are traced in any fullness. We must not be misled by the greater information about Paul and forget that many others were engaged in the same work. Yet any story of the beginning of Christianity must of necessity give much space to him and to his work.

1. Heredity and Early Environment

His birth may be dated near the beginning of the Christian era in the important city of Tarsus on the flat plain southeast of the Taurus mountain range. The present city lies five miles further inland than in that day because of the silting up of the Cydnus River. The city lay at the southern end of the trade route through the Cilician gates to Cappadocia and Asia Minor. It was a center of which the proud citizen could well say that it was "no mean city." The Jewish colony was large, and it may be that it comprised a separate "tribe" of citizens. When Paul referred in Romans 16:7 to certain "fellow-tribesmen" this relationship may have been in Tarsus.

Here in the dispersion there was not the same bitter hatred of Rome as the Palestinian Jews felt. Cultivated merchants of such a city could not be as isolated from gentile life. They were surrounded by artistic objects whose symbols were drawn from the gentile religious culture. Still, their food laws, sabbath observance, and devotion to the ancestral Torah brought an inevitable separation from the surrounding customs. The environment of Paul at Tarsus was not nearly as Greek as that of his contemporary Philo in Alexandria.

Saul was brought up in a strict Jewish home. He had been circumcised on the eighth day; his father traced his descent from the tribe of Benjamin, and this son had been given the name of the illustrious king from that tribe who had first thrown off the the Philistine yoke. His Roman name, Paul, was the one used in intercourse with Gentiles, and it was one which he bore from the beginning. Some believe that his claim to be a "Hebrew of the Hebrews" meant that Aramaic was the language spoken in his home. The book of Acts pictures Paul addressing a Jerusalem crowd in Aramaic. Yet it is clear from his letters that Paul read his Bible in the Greek translation. He wrote in Greek as one for whom it had been his mother tongue since childhood. It is in the field of language that the Greek influence upon Paul is most certain.

Luke adds that Paul was "Roman born"; hence his father had been a Roman citizen before him. Paul's friendly attitude toward the Roman government would argue for the truth of this statement. On the other hand, from the account of his hardships undergone for the gospel, it is apparent that he suffered indignities which were illegal in the case of a Roman citizen. Possibly all officials did not stop to investigate fully before they beat him with rods. But his appeal to Rome, after being taken prisoner at Jerusalem, affords strong corroboration of his Roman citizenship.

Paul's family apparently belonged to the middle class. It is no indication of poverty that the son learned the trade of a tentmaker. To this day, Tarsus is a center for the weaving of tent cloth out of goats' hair. Rabbi Judah b. Ilai (A.D. 150) said, "Whoever does not teach his son a trade teaches him to become a robber." Throughout his work as an apostle of Christ, Paul was self-supporting. Since the appeal to Rome was inevitably an expensive legal proceeding, some have conjectured that Paul was cut off by his father when he joined the Christian faith, and shortly before this imprisonment he had come into the family estate. That is at best an imaginative possibility.

A second-century book of legends about Paul contains this picturesque description of his bodily appearance. He was "a man little of stature, thin-haired upon the head, crooked in the legs, of good state of body, with eyebrows joining, and nose somewhat hooked, full of grace: for sometimes he appeared like a man, and sometimes he had the face of an angel" (2:3). The author of the Acts of Paul was probably drawing on his pious imagination, but in writing to the Corinthians, Paul himself admitted that "his bodily presence is weak." Later in the same letter he referred to a "thorn in the flesh." This has been interpreted as everything from malaria to epileptic fits. Modern psychologists have drawn elaborate pictures of Paul's periodic depressions, but these belong to our modern apocrypha. All that we really know about this "thorn in the flesh" is that it was a severe handicap to his work and so a "messenger of Satan." It was not removed by prayer even for such a man of faith as Paul, but he received divine strength to bear it. The one thing certain about Paul's physique is the enormous endurance of the apostle. A man who could trudge mountain and valley day after day, endure shipwreck and imprisonment, hardship and persecution, was no weakling. His restless energy drove him on with untiring zeal.

Brought up in an orthodox home, Saul received every opportunity to study the word of God. "At five years of age let children begin the Scripture, at ten the Mishnah, at thirteen let them be subjects of the law" (*Aboth* 5:21). So reads the early Jewish instruction. Whether there was a formal synagogue school in a city like Tarsus at this time we have no means of knowing. But when Paul the Christian quotes from about a hundred and fifty different verses scattered through one hundred chapters in the Old Testament it is clear that early in life he had attained an intimate knowledge of scripture. It was his own claim that he went beyond those of his age in his knowledge of the Jewish religion and in zeal for the traditions of the fathers. He joined the strictest party, the party of the Pharisees, and could say of himself that as touching the righteousness of the law he was blameless.

Tarsus was the third university center of the ancient world. According to the geographer Strabo, it ranked after Athens and Alexandria. Athenodorus, one of the most noted Stoic teachers, had come from there. But we may be sure that this devout young Jew did not go to the university for instruction. The quotation from one of Menander's comedies in First Corinthians is no more indication that he had studied Greek literature than the words "To be, or not to be" on the lips of a modern American is proof that he is a Shakespearean scholar. Of course Paul could not help absorbing some influences from the pagan environment. He knew the vocabulary of athletic games, but certainly he had never stripped in a gymnasium nor joined in the contests. He readily absorbed the methods used in the cynic diatribe, and the phraseology of the Mysteries and of popular Stoicism. These influences were mediated through the circle of God-fearers surrounding the synagogue. But they were accepted without realization of any borrowing. Paul never ceased to be the Jew who abhorred the excesses of pagan life.

According to Acts 22, Saul studied at Jerusalem under Gamaliel, one of the leading rabbis of the time. Nowhere else is that claim made within the New Testament. Though Paul claims to have been a Pharisee he never says that he was a scribe. It cannot be said that his letters reveal evidence of formal rabbinic training. It is true that they contain samples of allegorical interpretation of scripture and legendary expansions of the law. On the other hand, formal Halakah is not to be found. Modern Jewish writers insist that Paul was far removed from the more optimistic teaching of Palestinian Judaism and that he must have been trained somewhere in the dispersion.

This question is wrapped up with the locale of Paul's persecuting activity. According to Acts, Saul witnessed the stoning of Stephen at Jerusalem, and then led in the endeavor of the Sanhedrin to root out the church. He was on a mission from Jerusalem to Damascus when the great change came in his life. Though Paul refers to his persecution of the church and locates his conversion near Damascus he nowhere states that he persecuted believers in Jerusalem. On the contrary, he insists that he was not known by face to the Christian communities of Judea. Taken strictly, these words would rule out the picture in Acts. But that may be too rigid a construction of Paul's statement. In any case, all accounts agree that the religious fervor of this young Pharisee led him to persecute those who blasphemed by believing that a crucified felon could be God's Messiah.

Many have wondered if Paul ever saw Jesus. There is nothing to indicate that he had. Nor are we to conclude from Acts 26:10, where Paul says that he cast his vote against the Christians, that he had been an actual member of the Sanhedrin. In that case, he must have been married. While some scholars have contended that Paul was a widower, it is much more likely that he was a bachelor. This phrase merely indicates Paul's hearty participation in the aim to extirpate the sect of the Nazarenes.

2. The Spiritual Preparation

It is customary to speak of Paul's conversion. But he had never known a time when religion was not his supreme concern, nor when he did not serve the one eternal God with all the energy at his command. There was a moment, however, which completely divided one understanding of the purpose and will of God from another. In the midst of his devotion to God, his life was transformed from one center of loyalty to another. He was a twice-born man. Of the fact there cannot be the slightest doubt. Concerning many of the details, much uncertainty inevitably must remain.

Even the most sudden change is preceded by conditioning factors. The conversion of Paul was not without its preparation. The first factor was his *previous knowledge of the faith* which he was to adopt. The man who knows most about subversive activities is the man who makes it his business to root them out. When Paul debated with Nazarenes in the synagogues and followed them even into their homes, he must have become familiar with their message and their lives. Though he detested their error, he must have come to respect their sincerity. The more stubborn he found them in their faith, the more he learned that here were men and women who had found something worthy of devotion even to death.

A second element of preparation has often been found in the nature of *his experience under the Torah.* In his correspondence with the churches. Paul wrote of the inability of anyone completely to obey the Jewish law. Many have believed that it was the torture of this discovery during his Pharisaic days which led to his conversion. In other words, the unsatisfactory religious experience of Saul, the Jew, paved the way for the revelation of Christ to him. Certainly there have been instances of intense activity on behalf of a cause which has been due to a desperate endeavor to hide an inner uncertainty. But was that the case with Paul?

The evidence for this spiritual bankruptcy in Paul's life is far from conclusive. It is chiefly sought in the seventh chapter of the letter to the Romans. Here Paul wrote that except for the law he would not have known what coveting was. But through the commandment of the law, he was guilty of this sin. Imaginary pictures have been drawn from this of a little Jewish boy succumbing to his desire for an apple. But a closer examination of Paul's words makes it clear that the "I" in this passage is only a literary form. There never had been a time in Paul's own life when he had been without law. This had been literally true only of Adam, in whom Paul's life of sin had had a certain beginning. The commandment "not to eat of the fruit of this tree" had awakened in Adam the coveting of its fruit, and the commandment which had been designed to save him had in fact slain him.

Paul went on to describe the struggle between the two selves and the two laws which were at war in his own body. Undoubtedly this was a struggle with which he had had personal experience. But it would be truer to say that he was describing the way the life of an unredeemed man looked to Paul the Christian rather than giving a biographical report of his own pre-Christian experience. In contradiction to the hypothesis of an experience of failure in Judaism, there stands his indubitably biographical words, "As touching the law, I was blameless." We cannot say that he was in the midst of the bankruptcy of his Pharisaic legalism when Christ came to rescue him. The theory of the law in Romans was formulated to meet later problems in his missionary work.

There was, however, one other important point of preparation which is sometimes overlooked. From the standpoint of our complete contrast between Christianity and Judaism, we are apt to forget that Paul the Jew could have had no deeper longing than that God should send his anointed Messiah. Paul, the rigorous Pharisee, must have devoutly wished that the Nazarenes might have been right. If God would only send his deliverer to redeem his people! Of course, the idea that a crucified felon was the Anointed of God was blasphemous nonsense. But if it only could have been true that Messiah had come! The moment that Saul was convinced by some personal experience that this was the case, what we call his conversion was accomplished. We must never forget that Saul, the Pharisee, longed for the coming of that great day.

3. The Great Transformation

Our sources of information are twofold, the narrative of Acts and the references in Paul's own letters. Luke shows his appreciation of the importance of the event by recounting it three times. In addition to the original narrative in chapter 9, he has Paul include the story in the sermons in chapters 22 and 26. A light brighter than the sun shone about Paul and his companions, and he heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Luke emphasized the surrounding circumstances and the supernatural accompaniments. In some details, his presentations are inconsistent with each other. Who heard the voice and how many fell to the ground? More important differences concern the part of Ananias, the Damascus Christian, and the time of Paul's call to his gentile mission. But we must bear in mind that all these Lukan versions are at best secondary to Paul's own accounts of the change which had come to him.

Paul gives no details of the circumstances surrounding the event. He simply wrote, "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me." "God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The details are of little consequence beside this transforming fact. "Have I not seen the Lord?" Luke pictured a light of supernatural brightness, a literal voice from heaven, and physical blindness coming upon Paul. It is pointless to debate the correctness of this picture, for these things did not affect the real event. Nothing external had any special significance to any traveler to Damascus that day except Paul. Only on his mind had a light shone; only to his consciousness had appeared a never-to-be-forgotten face; he alone obeyed a heavenly voice.

4. Explanations of the Change

Many have been the attempts to "explain" the conversion of Paul. Several types of "*medical*" explanation of the event have been offered. It has been suggested that he suffered a sunstroke. It has been intimated by those who believe that his "thorn in the flesh" was epilepsy that he suffered one of his fits. Either event must be recognized as possible, though never capable of proof. But in neither case are we one whit further along in our understanding of what we set out to explain. Of all the sunstrokes and all the epileptic fits in history, no other led to exactly this result. If such a physical situation accompanied the experience, we are still no nearer an explanation of the transformation of Paul's spiritual insight.

The traditional interpretation has been to appeal to outright *supernaturalism.* A heavenly being, Jesus of Nazareth, was objectively present before Paul, spoke to him, and appeared to him. While Acts speaks only of a light and a voice, Paul himself in sisted many times that Christ had appeared to him. He had seen the Lord. There cannot be the slightest doubt that he was sure in his own mind of the reality of that vision. Paul lived in a world where supernatural beings and supernatural happenings, in the most literal sense of the word, were taken for granted. That a scientifically-minded person of the twentieth century would have interpreted the experience in the same way is another matter. It must never be forgotten that of all those on the road to Damascus that day, only Paul saw anything unusual. No photographer could have snapped anything that would have revealed the cause of Paul's conversion.

The change which came to Paul, as every other great religious experience, was one within the soul and mind of Paul. That does not rob it of its reality. It defines the sphere where every religious transformation must take place. The supernaturalistic vocabulary which a Paul of the first century used to describe his experience must not be explained away. But neither should we allow it to stand between us and an understanding of its reality. Something happened to Paul which convinced him that Jesus was alive, that he was God's Messiah, that he had called Paul to his service. A convention of that age described this in terms of visions and heavenly voices. From our very different background no one of us could have the same experience in the same way. But we must let Paul be himself and speak in his own way. His life was changed because it had pleased God to reveal his Son in him.

Paul's conversion did not mean the changing of a bad man into a good man. His life now received a new center of loyalty in Christ. The transformation did not mean that Paul ceased to be a Jew. To the very end, the fate of his people was a matter of deep concern to this true Zionist. But now he believed that it was through Christ that the people of God would receive redemption. Henceforth he must be a herald of the good news of that redemption.

5. Earliest Missionary Work

The events immediately following his conversion are likewise difficult to trace because of the conflicting stories told by Acts and by Paul himself. Luke described how the Lord sent to Paul a Damascus Christian by the name of Ananias. Paul had his sight restored, received baptism, and was informed that he was to be an apostle to the Gentiles. But in his letter to the Galatians, Paul insisted that he was an apostle neither from men, nor through a man. We cannot help wondering if Paul did not have a story in mind like this one in Acts 9, and that he was protesting firmly against it. Of course Paul was baptized by someone, and it may well have been by a man by the name of Ananias. But Paul wanted to make clear that God had set him apart from birth, and his call to preach to the Gentiles had come directly from God and not through any human mediation. Since in his two other accounts Luke gives quite different versions of Paul's call to the gentile ministry, we are justified in refusing to assign great importance to the place of Ananias in Paul's entrance to the Christian church.

The Acts pictures Paul as beginning at once to preach his new faith in the synagogues. That fits in with the impulsive nature of the apostle. Paul himself said that he went into Arabia following his conversion and then returned to Damascus. Some scholars have pictured the former rabbi retiring to the quiet of the desert to work out the details of his new theology. That is most unlikely. Once convinced of the truth of the messiahship of Jesus, Paul must have thrown himself with vigor into the preaching of his new faith. There is no enthusiasm like the zeal of a new convert.

Paul tells us that three years later he went up to Jerusalem. The Acts also describes such a trip, but it is very difficult to harmonize the two versions. Apparently this was the time when Paul was let down in a basket through a window in the wall to escape the clutches of the officers of Aretas, the king of Arabia. The political relationships of Damascus at this time are obscure, but it would appear that Paul had stirred up trouble for himself in Arabia. Acts reports the same escape over the wall, but Luke ascribed the unceremonious haste to fear of the Jews. He gives no hint that three years have elapsed. Instead, he says that the disciples were afraid to associate with the man who had so recently been their persecutor. It was only through the friendly offices of Barnabas that Paul was introduced to the apostles. He was then able to preach boldly in and out of Jerusalem and dispute with the Grecian Jews until once more their murderous hostility made flight the better part of valor.

But Paul himself insisted that he stayed only two weeks in Jerusalem and saw none of the apostles except Peter and James, the brother of Jesus. Since he went on oath that he was speaking the truth, it is probable that he knew that contrary stories were in circulation. He said nothing of any public preaching but went on to write that the churches in Judea did not even know him by face. Since this visit was three years after his conversion, it is unthinkable that his change of position was still doubted at Jerusalem. Almost the only point on which the accounts agree is in the itinerary—Damascus, Jerusalem, and then Cilicia. For Paul also wrote that he went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. Antioch, the capital of Syria, is the next place where we find him, according to both sources.

Concerning the nature of this early missionary work we know little. This should really be called Paul's first missionary journey. In the previous chapter, we have traced the gradual spread of the message about Jesus until Greeks were included among the converts. Luke believed that while isolated cases of preaching to Gentiles may have taken place earlier, the first real mission to them was carried on at Antioch. But it is clear that Paul did not originate this work. Though he became its most active champion, he was not the first to lead the way. We should picture him as one missionary among many, not yet the pioneering leader.

This was undoubtedly a period of growth and development in the life of Paul. It is not possible for us to describe just what Christian faith meant to him at this time. All of his own letters come from a much later period, and there are no earlier Christian documents by which a sure reconstruction could be made. In fact, we cannot state in detail to what understanding of Christianity

Paul was converted. The material upon which the earlier chapters have been based comes from a period later than Paul, and we cannot say with certainty whether all of this was as yet part of the Christian conviction.

But from our knowledge of the mature Paul, we may be sure that he was already a marked man among the apostles of Christ. In the community at Antioch, he at once took a position next to Barnabas. At this stage they were the unquestioned emissaries for any important work within the church. Yet Paul's true greatness was manifest only when he struck out on his own independent missionary work. But that did not occur until the legitimacy of the gentile mission had been fully established.

BIBLE READINGS

1. HEREDITY AND EARLY ENVIRONMENT: Phil. 3:4-7; Gal. 1:13-14: II Cor. 12:7-10.
2. THE SPIRITUAL PREPARATION: Rom. 7:7-25.
3. THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION: Acts 9:3-18; 22:3-21; 26:9-18; Gal. 1:15-17; II Cor. 4:6; I Cor. 9:1.
5. EARLIEST MISSIONARY WORK: Acts 9:19-31; Gal. 1:17-24; II Cor. 11:32-33.

CHAPTER XII

THE PROBLEM OF GENTILE INCLUSION

THE greatest crisis which faced the apostolic church involved the terms of admission for gentile converts. Did becoming a Christian mean incorporation into Judaism and the obligation to fulfill the rites and duties of that faith? Did gentile believers stand in a subordinate relationship if they remained uncircumcised? The struggle over this issue was to determine whether Christianity should become a universal religion, or stay within the bonds of religious nationalism. If the liberal party had not won, Europe and America would probably never have received the Christian gospel.

Like many other great crises, it did not rise suddenly, but came into existence without the conscious planning of anyone. We cannot say with certainty when the first Gentiles accepted the Christian message. The crowd at Pentecost may have included some non-Jews. Some think that the Hellenist group led by Stephen were Greeks rather than Grecian Jews. Luke is not very clear in the picture which he gives. Probably the reason is that at the time he wrote it was no longer remembered exactly how it had begun.

I. GENTILES JOIN THE CHURCH

Though Luke marked the preaching to Greeks at Antioch as a definite transition, he recounted one long anecdote preceding this. Peter was on a missionary tour which brought him to Joppa. It is instructive that he was lodging with another Simon who was a tanner by trade. That he should stay with one whose business might involve the handling of pig hides indicates that Peter's

Jewish scruples had become relaxed. In a narrative filled with supernatural visions and voices, we read how a centurion from Caesarea by the name of Cornelius, a devout God-fearer, was instructed to send for Peter. Peter was prepared for the interview by a vision of a sheet let down from heaven containing all kinds of forbidden animals. When he protested against the command to kill and eat them, the heavenly voice affirmed that there was nothing common or unclean in God's creation.

On the arrival of the messengers from Cornelius, Peter applied his vision to men and decided that God intended for him to go to the house of the Gentile and to preach the gospel. Yet the apostle was cautious for once and took with him a half dozen from the Joppa community. During the delivery of Peter's sermon, the Spirit fell upon his hearers. Its presence was demonstrated by the speaking in tongues as at Pentecost. In fact, the incident is sometimes referred to as the gentile Pentecost. Since the Gentiles had already received the Spirit, it was considered proper to baptize them into the Christian faith.

The repetitious style in which the incident is related, including Peter's subsequent defense of his actions at Jerusalem, shows that Luke felt it to be a crucial incident. Yet he knew no further work of this kind in which Peter had engaged. And the later conduct of the apostle was strangely inconsistent with this incident. If Peter received such clear divine instruction that there were no unclean foods or unclean men, why should a little warning from James lead him to withdraw from table fellowship with the Gentiles? It is no wonder that some scholars see more evidence here of the paralleling of the careers of Peter and Paul.

But the real development of the gentile mission was taking place outside Palestine. We have seen that large numbers of Gentiles had come into the church at Antioch. During a prayer meeting of this group, they were inspired to send Barnabas and Saul on a preaching tour. In his story, Luke emphasized the place of the Holy Spirit of God in directing their travels. Since Barnabas was a native of Cyprus, it was appropriate that they should first turn their steps in the direction of that island. While various anecdotes were reported concerning this part of the trip, nothing is said about the founding of any churches. Though the proconsul "believed" as a result of an impressive miracle, we are not told that he or any other Gentiles were actually baptized.

Crossing over to the mainland of Asia Minor, they moved up into the interior plateau until they came to Antioch of Pisidia. Mark left the expedition at the coast, and now Paul clearly took over the leadership. Instead of Barnabas and Paul, it is now "Paul and his company." We shall deal with Paul's missionary methods in greater detail in a later chapter. It is sufficient to note here that though he was not permitted to preach in the synagogue more than two sabbaths, that sufficed to attract a considerable following among the God-fearing Gentiles. Through this entering wedge, a significant work was started. A community was formed which was sufficiently established to persist, even though persecution drove Paul and Barnabas on.

Similar events took place at Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. These were progressively smaller cities in the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia. They contained mixed Phrygian and Lycaonian populations, and native dialects were spoken by many. Paul and Barnabas could attempt to reach only those who understood the Greek tongue. The Jews were consistently hostile, and little success was achieved by the missionaries among their own race; but many Gentiles heard the message gladly. In each of the towns a congregation was gathered. This presented a situation entirely different from that in a city like Antioch, and presumably in Damascus. There was no longer a gentile fringe attached to a Jewish church, like gentile God-fearers about a Jewish synagogue. Here were essentially gentile churches.

A glance at the map of Asia Minor raises the question in our minds as to why a native of Tarsus did not go home for a visit when he was as close as Derbe. But the Taurus Mountains and a kingdom outside the Roman Empire lay between. Instead, we are told that the missionaries retraced their steps and consolidated their work by appointing officials in the churches. On the return trip they preached also at Perga. Then, going down to Attalia, they sailed for home.

2. Variant Versions of the Controversy

It is at this point that Luke introduced his version of the apostolic council which faced the issue of the conditions under which Gentiles could be admitted to the church. Paul also gives a version of the controversy in his letter to the Galatians. There are so many serious divergences between the accounts that several different reconstructions of the series of events have been plausibly made. We face here one of the most puzzling historical problems within the New Testament.

Luke was writing at best at second hand, interpreting sources which he might have misunderstood. It is clear throughout his volume that he sought to minimize the conflicts and divisions within the early church. On the other hand, though Paul was one of the eyewitnesses and a participant in the struggle, we know that such a person is seldom an unbiased witness. It is natural for men to defend their own course of conduct, and to see their actions in the most favorable light. Though Paul swore that he was telling the truth, it was inevitably the truth as one of the antagonists saw it.

Acts represents the controversy as first arising in Antioch. Men came down from Judea and insisted upon the circumcision of the gentile converts. So Paul and Barnabas were sent to confer with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. But in 15:5 we read of the problem arising in Jerusalem as if that had not been the purpose of the meeting. Turning to Galatians we read that Paul went up with Barnabas "by revelation" to lay before the pillars of the church at Jerusalem the gospel which he preached among the Gentiles. We may be certain that Paul had no intention of changing his message, but he did think that it was desirable to have approval from "those of repute." He could not willingly accept division within the church, and that seemed to be threatened by the development of the gentile mission. It is clear that these discussions involved circumcision, for they concerned Titus, an uncircumcised Greek.

But do Acts 15 and Galatians 2 refer to the same event? Paul insists that this was only his second visit to Jerusalem following his conversion. Acts, on the other hand, records an intervening visit in 11:30 when famine relief for the brethren in Judea was sent by the hand of Barnabas and Paul. Since it is most unlikely that Paul could in honesty have omitted any visit to Jerusalem, some scholars identify Galatians 2 with the trip in Acts 11:30. They hold that Acts 15 deals with an entirely different event.

This solution of the problem seems to me to be quite impossible. After the question had once been settled, as described in Galatians 2, it could never have been raised completely anew as this reconstruction of history would require. The most probable solution of the problem is that Acts 11:30 and Acts 15 are two divergent accounts of the same meeting. Since Luke did not realize that they referred to the same visit, he simply inserted both at different points in his story.

3. The Case for the Judaizers

Before going on with the account of the controversy, we should become fully aware of the strength of the case of the Jewish Christians who were demanding circumcision from all. It is not easy to appreciate the intensity of any struggle after the issue has been decided. From the completed result we might think that there was no other possible conclusion; but the Judaizers could present a very strong case.

First of all, had not Jesus been a Jew? Had he not kept the law? Though he had been attacked for lack of complete conformity, had he not denied any intention of destroying the law? Had he not said that not one jot or tittle of the law would pass away until all should be fulfilled? At least such was the tradition preserved by Matthew. What right then had missionaries like Paul to excuse Gentiles from any provisions of the Torah?

In the second place, did not the Old Testament affirm that the promises of God were for the children of Abraham? No Jew denied that Gentiles might share in these promises, least of all those Jews who believed in the messiahship of Jesus. But if Gentiles were to share in the promises which God had given his people, they must become sons of Abraham by accepting the covenant of circumcision. To make any lesser condition was to deny the explicit word of scripture; so the Christian Pharisees might insist. Salvation was not for individuals as such, but for those who belonged to the people of God.

In the third place, who had the right to determine the conditions of entrance to the church? Was it not the disciples, headed by Peter? Was it not James, the brother of Jesus? What right had an upstart like Paul to preach a "marked-down" gospel which did not include strict acceptance of the Jewish law? Correct teaching and practice were determined by the guardians of the tradition. Paul had the teaching of Jesus only at second hand.

4. Paul's Reply

From Paul's letters, we may reconstruct something of the answer which he made to this case. Of course we cannot be sure how much of his position had been worked out in detail at the time of the Jerusalem meeting. The letter to the Galatians, from which we draw our information, was written in the midst of later crises on the mission field. But from it we can trace the main positions with which Paul met these contentions of the Judaizers.

It is instructive to note that Paul did not attempt to appeal to the words or the practice of Jesus on this point. How much he actually knew of these is another question. But for him Jesus was not primarily a teacher and example. Paul argued from the new situation which had been brought about by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Twentieth-century Christians, who hope to find in Jesus solutions for their problems, should note that within twenty years after the death of Jesus, the most critical problem of the church could not be solved satisfactorily by appeal to any of his specific utterances.

Paul did not deny that the promises of God were for the children of Abraham. But he turned the point of this argument by raising the question of how one could become a child of Abraham. He insisted that it was not by accepting circumcision but by having faith, for faith was the condition under which God had blessed Abraham. Paul agreed that salvation did not come to isolated individuals. But he disagreed with the Judaizers on the way in which men became a part of the people of God.

Instead of *admitting* that he had not received his gospel from those who had gone before him, Paul *gloried* in the fact. He stressed his lack of any contact with the leaders in Jerusalem. He could not and had not received his message from them. It had come to him through a revelation from God. God had called him for this work with Gentiles; his gospel had not come from men but from God.

5. The Decision According to Acts

When we turn to Acts, we do not find any statement of the case made by the Judaizers, nor any argument in rebuttal. Luke offers only the testimony of the experiences of the missionaries. First Peter told of the conversion of Cornelius, and pleaded that they should not lay on the Gentiles a burden which they themselves could not bear. In other words, Peter is represented as delivering Paul's essential message. After Barnabas and Paul had rehearsed their experiences, James rose to recommend the decision. He rather than Peter was the recognized head of the community. We are not told when the transition had been made from leadership by the Twelve to leadership by James; but the fact is clear.

James asserted that the word of the prophet had been fulfilled, that all of the Gentiles should seek after the Lord. When the reader examines Amos 9:12, from which the words are drawn, he does not find anything like that, but instead an expression of domination by the Jews over other nations. Luke was copying the passage as it stood in the Septuagint; this translation deviated widely in this passage from the original Hebrew. But it is unthinkable that James could have actually based his argument on words which were not in his Bible. Hence we must ascribe all of this to Luke. James agreed that the Gentiles should not be troubled further, but he recommended that the Council should write telling the churches of Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia to abstain from certain things.

This decree presents the historian with a difficult problem. According to the most probable reading of the text, they were to "abstain from the pollution of idols, from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood." Some manuscripts, however, omit "what is strangled," and add a negative formulation of the golden rule. If that is original, the whole could be interpreted as a series of moral demands. Gentiles should refrain from idol worship, from sexual immorality, and from murder. But why should anyone think it necessary to insist upon sending a letter with such elementary moral demands? Clearly the longer text should be read. Then all of the demands were of a ritual character: Gentiles should refrain from eating meat sacrificed to idols, from marriage within the relationships forbidden by the Levitical law, and from eating any meat containing blood because the animal had been strangled. But is any such agreement on the part of Paul consistent with his own presentation of the situation?

6. The Verdict According to Paul

Paul described only a private interview with the leaders of the church, of whom James and Cephas and John are mentioned. His opponents are designated as false brethren "who came in to spy out our freedom." These insisted on the circumcision of Titus, the Greek Christian who had accompanied Paul and Barnabas. According to the text of most manuscripts, Paul wrote that he did not submit to this demand for a moment, in order that the truth of the gospel might continue with them. The Greek at this point is exceedingly awkward, but there is another reading found in some manuscripts for which originality may be claimed. According to that, Paul wrote that he *did* submit for a moment, in order that the truth of the gospel might continue with them.

Many modern scholars think that the latter text was original, and that Paul consented to the circumcision of Titus, though he insisted that he was not compelled to do so. They point out that according to Acts 16:3 he later had Timothy circumcised. I do not think that this conclusion is to be accepted, for the situations were not really parallel. Here at Jerusalem the principle of admission to the church was at stake. Paul could hardly have contended that he won their liberty by backing down on the crucial issue. It is an accepted principle of textual criticism that the harder reading is more likely to be original. It seems to me that it was the difficult grammatical construction which led a later scribe to attempt to improve it—to the loss of Paul's consistency.

Titus was Paul's living argument from success. To the theories of his opponents he presented a flesh-and-blood demonstration of what the Spirit of God could accomplish without any rite of circumcision. This realistic answer won the day. Paul went on to insist that they imparted nothing to him. On the contrary, when they saw that he had been entrusted with a gospel to the uncircumcised, they extended the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas and bade them Godspeed. Paul does not say that any of these "pillars" had any intention of embarking on a gentile mission. In fact, Peter is specifically designated as an apostle to the circumcised. But they laid only one requirement on him, that he should remember the poor. Paul could not have written in that way if he had really joined in such a letter as "the apostolic decree."

7. The Problem of Table Fellowship

Paul did not end his story at this point. An important sequel took place at Antioch. As is so often the case, other issues arose after the problem had presumably been settled. The "pillars" had agreed that circumcision and the rest of the law should not be required of gentile converts to Christianity. But undoubtedly they had taken it for granted that Jewish Christians would continue to observe the law. No issue seems to have arisen on that point in Jerusalem, but it was otherwise at Antioch. There large numbers of Jews and Gentiles associated together in the church. The center of their religious fellowship was a common meal, the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This was not simply a symbolic meal, but one at which the poor of the community were fed. How could the Jewish Christians observe all of their food laws, if they consented to sit down at table with gentile Christians?

When Cephas came to Antioch, he joined in the customary table fellowship until emissaries from James warned him. Then he drew back. Paul rather harshly accused both Cephas and Barnabas of insincerity, but that was not necessarily the case. Probably they were now beginning to see more clearly that they had come to the parting of the ways. If they followed Paul in his position, it meant a complete break with Judaism; it meant an entirely separate Christian body. They were not yet ready for such a radical step.

Paul became so excited in reporting to the Galatians what he had told Cephas that he neglected to tell the result of the altercation. But I think that we can read it between the lines. The Cephas party which developed at Corinth was clearly one unfriendly to Paul. Though Acts gives other reasons, Luke makes it clear that Barnabas was no longer associated with Paul in his missionary work but was replaced by Silas. From that time on, Antioch was no longer the headquarters for Paul. He paid the city only one brief visit, and Jerusalem had never been his home as a Christian. In other words, Paul became isolated from much of the church in contending that there should be complete brotherhood at the Lord's Table as well as abrogation of the law for gentile converts.

We are now in position to turn back to that puzzling apostolic decree. When Paul later discussed with the Corinthians the problem of meat sacrificed to idols and other questions concerning food, he nowhere indicated that he had been party to an official decision by the church at Jerusalem. He argued the case quite independently. On the other hand, since the position of the decree was recognized in the book of Revelation and in other early Christian literature, Luke could not have invented it. The most probable conclusion is that the decree represented the solution of the problem of table fellowship which was adopted in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia after the rise of the crisis to which Paul referred in Galatians 2:11. But Paul went his own way, founding more and more gentile churches on the basis of his own understanding of the gospel. He did not convince the more conservative group, but he ultimately triumphed through the remarkable success of the gentile churches founded by him and his coworkers.

8. The Probable Sequence of Events

A reconstruction of the order of events must now be attempted after this analysis of the conflicting sources. We should begin with an event which has been temporarily passed over. In Acts 12 we read that Herod undertook to persecute the Christians. He killed James, the son of Zebedee, and put Peter in prison, awaiting the conclusion of the feast of Unleavened Bread. This Herod was a nephew of the one who ruled Galilee during the lifetime of Jesus. Josephus informs us that in A.D. 41 Rome gave up ruling Judea through a procurator, and united practically all of Palestine into a petty kingdom under this Jewish monarch. He genuinely sought to appease the Jews and this persecution of the Nazarenes was an example. Fortunately or unfortunately he died suddenly in A.D. 44. The events recounted in this chapter probably fell in the spring of that year.

During the night, a very flesh-and-blood-acting "angel" enabled Peter to escape from prison. We are told that he went to the home of the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered in prayer. The vivid picture of the maid, who left him knocking at the door while she ran to report the good news, indicates that the story came from a good source. After leaving word to report his escape to James, Peter "departed, and went to another place." Where did he go? The trip through Lydda to Joppa which Luke describes in Acts 9:32 may reflect this journey. Sometime after the death of Herod, Peter may have preached to Cornelius at Caesarea. He returned to Jerusalem about the same time that Paul and Barnabas brought a famine contribution from Antioch. The most probable date of this famine, based on the information in Josephus, is A.D. 46. Paul and Barnabas had recently returned from their missionary tour through southern Asia Minor though it is possible that this journey came between the Jerusalem meeting and the later discussion at Antioch. If the former was the case, it was natural that the conditions for entrance to the church should occupy the center of discussion. Despite the insistence of many Jewish Christians, circumcision and the rest of the law were not required of gentile converts. This decision was authoritatively approved by James.

At some later period (possibly during A.D. 47) Cephas came to Antioch. Then the dispute over table fellowship took place which led to the final split with Barnabas and to Paul's independent missionary work. The next date which we can fix is the time of Paul's arrival in Corinth in the spring of 49. This reconstruction is admittedly tentative, but it seems to be the most probable one. There are big gaps in Luke's story, and we must not be troubled if the detailed sequence is uncertain. But one thing is clear, and that is the important thing. Paul won liberty for gentile Christianity from the confining restrictions of the Jewish law. He set free the universal implications in the message of Jesus, and made it possible for Christianity to become the spiritual faith of all men.

The importance of the victory of Paul for the future development of Christianity can hardly be overemphasized. Not only were the bands of national particularism burst for all time. A legalistic interpretation of Christianity was definitely repudiated. While the temptation to fall back into legalism has always been at hand, while Christian bodies have sometimes made as unreasonable requirements as the demand of the Judaizers for circumcision, still a valuable precedent was set. Paul insisted that faith in Christ was the essence of Christianity and that the believer had been set free from living by statute to the liberty of the Spirit. That opened the way to a genuinely spiritual religion. Though vigilance is the eternal price of liberty, Paul's victory made it forever impossible to identify Christianity with any nationalism or any legalism. Its essence lay in faith and love.

BIBLE READINGS

1. GENTILES JOIN THE CHURCH: Acts 10:1–11:18; 13:1-15, 42-52; 14:1-28.
2. VARIANT VERSIONS OF THE CONTROVERSY: Acts 11:27-30; 12:24-25; 15:1-5; Gal. 2:1-10.
3. THE CASE FOR THE JUDAIZERS: Matt. 5:18-19; 7:6.
4. PAUL'S REPLY: Gal. 1:11-12; 3:1-9.
5. THE DECISION ACCORDING TO ACTS: Acts 15:6-35.
6. THE VERDICT ACCORDING TO PAUL: Gal. 2:1-10.
7. THE PROBLEM OF TABLE FELLOWSHIP: Gal. 2:11-21; I Cor. 8:1-13.
8. THE PROBABLE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS: Acts 12:1-23.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WONDERS OF THE NEW AGE

THE beginning of the Christian church was marked by miracles and wonders and signs. This is the uniform testimony of our early sources. Paul was the first Christian writer. He tells us that Christ worked through him, not only by word and deed, but also "in the power of signs and wonders" (Rom. 15:19). Miracles were wrought among his converts by the power of the Spirit (Gal. 3:5). In addition to the gift of prophecy, endowment by the Spirit brought the gift of working miracles and the gift of healing (I Cor. 12:10, 28). The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote that "God bore witness with signs and wonders" to the ministry of Jesus (2:4). No account of Christian beginnings could be complete which did not include the stories of these wonders which had taken place in their midst.

1. MIRACLES OF THE APOSTLES

From the very beginning the apostles are said to have worked miracles. According to the most authentic version, the apostles first came into the public eye through the healing of a lame man in the Temple by Peter and John. They had no alms for the beggar who lay by the beautiful gate, but they could give a greater present; they enabled him to walk. Luke emphasized his "leaping" to show that this was one of the wonders of the messianic era predicted in the book of Isaiah (35:6). The healing took place by the power of "the name" of Jesus. Through the name of the coming Messiah, the powers of the new age were already present.

Luke reports that the fame of the apostles became so great that people brought their sick on couches and laid them in the road in the hope that Peter's shadow might fall upon them. Other anecdotes of the healing ministry of Peter were told. When he came to Lydda, he healed a man by the name of Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years. At Joppa he is said to have raised from the dead a devout woman by the name of Dorcas who was noted for her fine needlework. The healings in the gospels are almost without exception of anonymous individuals. Here, the names of people known to the congregations are given.

We are told that in Samaria the wonders performed by Peter attracted such attention that a Samaritan sorcerer by the name of Simon tried to buy the secret of bestowing the Holy Spirit. Apparently he was a Samaritan teacher of a religious syncretism who also exercised occult powers. At some time he came within the sphere of Christian influence. Later apocryphal books elaborated further conflicts of Simon Magus and Simon Peter at Rome. The story included in the Acts of the Apostles shows how close at times the Christian movement stood to other religious cults, and also what supernatural powers were believed to accompany it.

Gifts of healing did not belong simply to a few individuals. They were ascribed to many of those endowed with various gifts of the Spirit. Wonders and miracles were performed by Stephen and Philip as well as by Peter and John (Acts 6:8; 8:7). As the apostles went out, they were commissioned to heal the sick (Matt. 10:1). So famous did the name of Jesus become in exorcising demons that exorcists outside the Christian movement employed it (Mark 9:38 ff., Matt. 7:22).

2. Paul's Gift of Healing

In the Acts of the Apostles, all of the other narratives of specific miraculous incidents concern the apostle Paul. Luke seemed intent upon paralleling every miracle ascribed to Peter with a similar one from the life of Paul. The apostle to the Gentiles did not stand one whit behind the leader of the Twelve. At Lystra in southern Asia Minor, Paul found a man who had been a cripple from birth and had never walked. Seeing that he had faith, Paul told him to rise: "And he leaped up and walked." Once more the language is reminiscent of the prophecies of the messianic age. Instead of being put in prison by the authorities as Peter and

John had been, Paul and Barnabas discovered that the crowd were about to offer sacrifices to them as to gods.

Paralleling the story of Peter's shadow, it is said that people at Ephesus brought handkerchiefs with which to touch Paul, that they might carry them to their sick. Similar to the conflict between Peter and Simon Magus, we read that wandering Jewish exorcists tried to use the name of "the Jesus whom Paul preaches." But they discovered that the name of Jesus was not a magic formula to be used safely by all, for the demons turned upon the exorcists and overpowered them.

Paul also raised the dead. A young man by the name of Eutychus fell out of a third-story window during an extended meeting at Troas and was picked up dead. But Paul raised him to life again. This story stands in the section of Acts which was apparently drawn from the travel diary of an eyewitness. This part of the book is just as full of miraculous incidents as the rest. That is especially noteworthy if the old tradition is correct that its author was Luke, a physician. We read in another of these "we" sections that when Paul was shipwrecked on the island of Melita a poisonous viper fastened upon him but the apostle was not killed. After Paul had cured the father of Publius, the leading man of the island, of dysentery and a fever, many sick were brought to him and they were healed.

Thus we see that stories of healings were by no means confined to Jesus. Throughout the apostolic age, similar events were ascribed to others. This shows that the miracles of Jesus did not set him apart from all others in the exercise of power. If he had healed the sick, so had Peter and Paul. If he had raised the dead, so had Peter and Paul. These events were *signs of the new age,* not proofs of the divinity of Christ. Nevertheless, it was Jesus who had introduced this new age of power; the miracles were the work of the Spirit which Christ had bestowed. The apostles wrought in the power of the name of the Jesus who had triumphed over the powers of evil. Hence Jesus did occupy a unique place in these wonders of the new age and we must return to examine further the stories of his miraculous power.

3. The Signs of the Gospel

Modern men and women, brought up on ideas of natural law, are apt to take one of two positions regarding these miracle stories. Either they are rejected outright as belonging to a supernaturalism which science has dispelled, or they are accepted "on faith," though in contradiction to normal experience, as evidences by which God authenticated his revelation to men. A sounder approach would lead us to read these miracle stories in the light of the faith of these early believers who were convinced that they lived in an age of miracle.

The first Christians proclaimed the Lord Jesus Christ in competition with other cult gods of antiquity. Many of these were healing gods. Asclepius was the most famous of the healing divinities; centers of his worship have been discovered even in Palestine. No Christian believed that his Lord was less powerful than these gods. Not only did the preachers of Jesus have to meet the competition of the other cult deities of the time; they had to reach a people obsessed with all of the popular love of marvel. It has truly been said that "miracle is the best-loved child of faith." Under these circumstances, the only wonder is that the accounts in the gospels are as restrained as they are.

Many of the marvels described in the New Testament are presented as *signs*. A sign is more than an unusual and inexplicable event. It is an incident that has its significance in teaching a lesson. Typical of these is the story of the marvelous draught of fish which Jesus made possible for Peter. Luke associated the story with the original calling of Peter, but the twenty-first chapter of John relates it with much greater probability to his calling by the risen Lord. The disciples had toiled all night in vain. But at the command of Jesus they let down their nets and enclosed a multitude of fish. We cannot conceive of Jesus using such a means to assure his disciples that they would never lack food. The event symbolized the multitudes which were brought into the church by the missionary work of Peter on behalf of the risen Christ. John further heightened the symbolism by insisting that the net did not break despite the number of the fish (153, possibly the number of different species).

Several other stories in the synoptic gospels bear the clear mark of symbolic teaching. There is no possible justification for Jesus pronouncing a curse upon a tree which did not bear figs, when it is specifically stated that it was not the season for figs. But as a "sign" of the repudiation of an unfruitful Judaism, it is perfectly understandable. When Mark reports a darkness over the earth during the hours of the crucifixion, it is clearly a symbol of the apparent triumph of the powers of darkness. Luke suggested that it was an eclipse of the sun (23:44-45), but this would be an astronomical impossibility at the full moon. Again, when it is said that the curtain of the Temple was torn in two at the crucifixion, this symbolized the removal of the barrier in the Temple between man and the Holy of Holies where God dwelt. Matthew added an earthquake to explain the "sign" by a physical cause (27:51). In each case it was originally a sign to teach the significance which early Christians found in the event.

In the Gospel of John all miracles are interpreted as "signs." They do not reveal the compassion of Jesus for the unfortunate. but are sovereign manifestations of his "glory." He always takes the initiative; he never acts in response to human importunity. When John tells how Jesus healed a man who was born blind, it soon becomes apparent that the evangelist is thinking chiefly of the blindness of sin, and this incident is a sign of the fact that sight or salvation comes through Jesus. Some modern readers have been embarrassed by the story of the turning of water into wine at Cana. It seems unworthy of Jesus to contribute to the merriment of a wedding feast by presenting the host with six hundred quarts of good wine. If it was a temptation of the devil to turn stones into bread, what is to be said of this? But it should be remembered that the evangelist specifically calls the incident not a miracle but a "sign." Our first question should be, "Of what is this a sign?" The answer is easy to give. What Jesus had to give was better than anything that had gone before. He bestowed not the water of purification, such as the former disciples of John the Baptist had known, but the wine of the Spirit.

4. The Lord of Nature

Other stories were told by the early Christians to emphasize the power of their heavenly Lord over nature. Even on earth he had shown the power which led them to assert that he was the mediator of creation as well as redemption. In an earlier chapter we saw how the meal with the multitude by the Sea of Galilee came to be reported as a miraculous multiplication of food. Jesus was the revelation of the God who supplied all of their material needs through his creative power. An allied motif lay in the Old Testament background. Both Elisha and Elijah had multiplied food. The wonders of the new age were certainly as great. Likewise, if these ancient prophets of God had raised the dead, Jesus and his apostles surely possessed even greater power to conquer death.

Two stories illustrated the power of Jesus over the sea. According to one, Jesus was asleep in the stern of their boat when a storm broke on the lake of Galilee. In their fear, the disciples appealed to Jesus. As we read the account, we should not wonder why experienced fishermen should expect to be saved in a storm on the lake by a landsman woodworker. They were not appealing to a human carpenter, but to the divine power of which the Psalmist wrote:

> Thou rulest the pride of the sea;
> When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. (Ps. 89:9.)

That was what happened at the command of Jesus. I myself have seen storms rise suddenly on the Sea of Galilee and subside as quickly, but we should never imagine that Mark was thinking of a providential coincidence. He was portraying one who was the Lord of nature. The incident recalls the Jewish story of a boat crossing the lake in which there was one Hebrew lad together with many Gentiles. The heathen prayed in vain to their gods, but the moment the Jew prayed, the storm ceased. This legendary motif was widespread, but we should note the quite different faith which Mark pictured. Jesus is not presented as praying with more perfect trust than others. Here was the one whose command the winds and the waves must obey.

The other incident combined the motif of an epiphany of Jesus to his disciples on the water with that of their helper in the storm. Had not the mantle of Elijah parted the waters so that he could walk through them? (II Kings 2:14.) Did not the Psalmist sing,

> Thy way was in the sea,
> And thy paths in the great waters? (Ps. 77:19.)

Surely Jesus was one who came even to those in trouble on the sea, and stilled the waves and quieted the hearts of men by his presence. We do not know whether this was first told as a resurrection appearance, but Mark located it in the earthly life of Jesus. He closed the incident with his favorite theme of the hardening of the disciples before the transcendent revelation in Jesus. Matthew closed his version upon another note: "They . . . . worshiped him, saying, Of a truth you are the Son of God."

5. The Place of Miracle in Faith

Surprisingly few miracles of a crass type are reported in our canonical gospels. This stands in marked contrast to the later apocryphal gospels, which delighted in tasteless stories of sheer marvels. They recounted how the Christ child extended boards to any desired length, carried water in his tunic when a jar broke, and made clay pigeons come alive. Matthew shows the most fully developed legends within the New Testament. While he does not actually say that Peter pulled a coin out of a fish's mouth to pay the Temple tax for Jesus and himself, that is clearly implied in the command of Jesus. Such an incident stands quite outside the character of the true Jesus of history.

It was impossible for early Christians to proclaim their faith without the use of miracle stories. But these must not simply be dismissed as the product of an unscientific age. We should be very slow in defining the possible in terms of our own experience in a sober, scientific age. Creative personalities in times of great enthusiasm do perform deeds that seem incredible in more prosaic periods. But on the other hand, we should not forget how widespread the claims for miracles are. Miracle stories were more frequent on Hellenistic soil, but not a few healings are reported from rabbis. Belief in miracles is not confined to antiquity. Down through the ages they have been claimed. No Roman Catholic saint can be canonized without two authenticated "miracles." At places like Lourdes and St. Anne de Beaupré, near Quebec, miraculous healings are still claimed.

Believers who insist upon the exact historicity of the miracles reported in the New Testament need an answer for those who claim the same certainty for other miracle stories. It is not consistent to take one attitude toward all events reported in the Bible and another toward other stories of marvels. In all ages, faith has believed in miracle because it has trusted in a God who was not a prisoner within a soulless mechanism but a power who could help. Though scientific knowledge has opened our eyes more clearly to the faithfulness of God in his world, we should not lose sight of the values which miracle stories sought to express. *Miracle is an event of significance for religion;* and the early Christians were trying to interpret what to them was the mightiest act of God in history.

But there is a more important question than the way in which these miracle stories fit into our preconceived scientific ideas. That is the way they fit in with the basic ideals of Jesus. No miracle is reported which saved him from death, or smoothed his path during life. To cast himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple would be to tempt God, not to trust him. To turn stones into bread was a suggestion of the devil.

Jesus never pointed to marvels to authenticate his mission. When men came asking a sign from heaven, he had a ready reply. "No sign shall be given to this generation." He never sought to obtain a spiritual objective by an external wonder. According to one form of the tradition he said, "No sign shall be given except the sign of Jonah." In the accounts given by the evangelists we see clearly the difference between his own view and the standpoint of a later time. Matthew interpreted the "sign of Jonah" in terms of the resurrection, conceived as an external, physical event. "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." But in the earlier tradition, the sign of Jonah was the preaching of repentance. Nineveh had received no warning of her doom but a prophetic call to repentance. The contemporaries of Jesus would likewise have no sign but a call to repentance.

Early Christianity was an age of miracle. Jesus himself was the greatest miracle—not individual events which we do not fully understand, but his whole appearance in history. As the apostolic message was carried to men, miracles did take place. Lives were transformed under the power of the Spirit. We may be sure that bodies were healed as well as the souls of men. We may be confident that the seemingly impossible was often accomplished as these men of faith put their faith to the test. But we should not feel called upon to believe that angels or earthquakes were sent to free God's messengers from prison. That bespeaks a character of God quite at variance with what experience can verify. A wiser faith will appeal to the permanently verifiable experiences rather than to ancient stories of supernatural interventions. But early Christian testimony is unanimous that the Spirit of God was creating new life among men.

BIBLE READINGS

1. Miracles of the Apostles: Acts 3:1-10; 5:12-16; 8:8-11, 18-23; 9:32-42.
2. Paul's Gift of Healing: Acts 14:8-12; 19:11-17; 20:9-12; 28:1-9.
3. The Signs of the Gospel: Mark 11:12-14, 20-21; 15:33, 38; Luke 5:1-11; John 21:4-11; 2:1-11; 9:1-7.
4. The Lord of Nature: Mark 4:35-41; 6:45-52.
5. The Place of Miracle in Faith: Matt. 17:27; Mark 8:11-12; Matt. 12:39-40; 4:1-4; Luke 11:29-32.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ETHICAL STANDARDS OF THE NEW FAITH

CHRISTIANITY developed as a new religion, not as a new ethic. Hence, no study of its beginnings which is carried on simply from the ethical point of view can ever be adequate. The ethical teaching of Jesus had been casual and in a sense incidental to his religious mission. He had not presented men with an ethical system, for he assumed the Jewish ethic based on the law. He had spoken on ethical questions only as the occasion seemed to demand it. It is impossible to frame a complete ethic on the recorded words of Jesus alone, for he had taken for granted the body of moral teaching which was the Jewish heritage of all his hearers. Jesus sought to emphasize the ideals most needing stress at that moment and to state those positions on which he differed from the dominant opinion of his day. This fact should remind us that a later generation cannot expect to exact a complete ethic from the scattered maxims which are preserved from Jesus. As a matter of fact, no Christian ethic ever has been confined simply to his teaching.

1. THE USE OF THE TEACHING OF JESUS

The ethical teachings of Jesus which we do possess comprise those sayings which the early church found useful in the moral instruction of their converts. As long as believers came from Judaism, the same ethical presuppositions were to be found as during the ministry of Jesus. The Bible of the early Christians was the Old Testament. This was valued not only for the prophecies of the career of the Messiah and the promise of salvation. It likewise contained the ethical code by which society should be controlled and by which men should live. The distinctive message of the church was not first of all a different ethic from that contained in the Old Testament. No sermon recorded in Acts has any appreciable amount of ethical instruction. The apostolic message concerned God's salvation. This called for repentance, and in the statement of its ethical basis the words of Jesus had a unique importance. Yet from the first they did not stand alone, but were a supplement to the written word of God.

As long as Christians looked upon themselves as true members of the Jewish community, the ethical authority of its leaders must have been recognized. But within the Christian brotherhoods an intensity of fellowship developed. As persecution drove these groups further and further from the orthodox synagogue, they had to find ways of making their own decisions regarding the correct application of ethical principles to the problems of life. Since Jesus was their risen Lord, any decision which could be ascribed to him became a valued part of the instruction of the community. As soon as Gentiles were received, more extensive ethical teaching was required. Though many of them had some familiarity with Jewish monotheism before their conversion to Christianity, they needed fuller grounding in ethical ideals than lifelong Jews.

On the whole, the words of Jesus were preserved with remarkable fidelity. Yet slavish imitation was never exalted in the early church. Jewish religion was in the process of building up an enormous commentary on the law. The opinions and interpretations of the leading rabbis were ultimately collected in the Mishnah and the later portions of the Talmud. But the early Christians never produced any such commentary on the words of Jesus. These sayings never became authoritative in a static sense. Believers were in possession of the Holy Spirit which Jesus himself had bestowed upon them. As bearers of the Spirit, their prophets continued to be inspired by God. They expected contemporary ethical guidance and were not confined to a dependence on the tradition of Jesus' words to supplement the Old Testament.

Under these circumstances it was inevitable that sayings of Jesus should be reworded to meet the changing situations, and developed to apply to problems which had not been within his view. In doing this, the first Christian teachers had no thought of misrepresentation, any more than contemporary authors of books on the teachings of Jesus for whom there is an invisible boundary between the historic teachings and the modern applications which are made. The use of the teaching of Jesus throughout the entire apostolic age will be dealt with in this chapter. Therefore the reader must be on his guard against assuming that all of these developments took place during the first decades. The gospels were not written until the last third of the century, and their formulations of the teaching of Jesus presuppose a developed gentile church quite separate from Judaism. Not all of these words were used in any one part of the church, but we include here all of the strands of tradition.

Like the ethical teaching of Jesus, the ethic of the early church was oriented from the personal rather than the social point of view. Believers had renounced this world for the kingdom of God. That was not a social order which man was to build, but the new age which God would soon send. Hence the basic point of view was world-renouncing. There was no thought of changing economic or social institutions. Individuals were called upon to live by the law of God. Hence, as we shall see, the maxims do not deal with the wider problems of the organization of society—here they had no responsibility—but with relations within the Christian communities. These were not ideals watered down to the level of a semipagan society. They were standards for men and women who turned from the accepted patterns of life in their firm belief that Jesus was God's Messiah and would soon come in judgment.

We shall not repeat the material assembled in the chapter on Jesus' interpretation of the law. Those sayings come to us, not as Jesus gave them, but as the material was used in training Christian believers. There we saw the religious focus of all the teaching of Jesus. The central point of reference was not a humanitarian concern but the doing of the will of God. Since God looked upon the heart rather than outward conformity, the chief emphasis was laid on purity of motive and absolute sincerity in the performance of all duties. Precedence was given to the ethical over the ceremonial though rites were not repudiated. The inward and radical character of the ethical demands of Jesus were their most striking quality. Utmost courage was called for in paying the price of renunciation.

2. The Practical Meaning of Love

Beside the words of the Shema, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart," Jesus had placed the words of the Holiness Code, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." This was accepted as the central ethical principle throughout the early church. But practically no sayings from Jesus were preserved in which the word "love" was used. Love for enemies had been stressed, and the early church had plenty of occasion to pray for those who persecuted them and despitefully used them. But sentimental language was avoided by the Master. He had dealt with the specific avenues in which love was to be expressed.

First and foremost stood *practical helpfulness* to those in need. Luke associated with the great commandment an inquiry as to the identity of the neighbor whom man should love. The reply of Jesus was given in the form of a story. If the connection is original the answer is, "My neighbor is anyone who is in need." But the story really illustrates how to be a neighbor. A traveler between Jerusalem and Jericho had fallen among thieves and was beaten and robbed. A priest and a Levite passed by, but they continued on their way without giving any help. They were so absorbed in the religious duties before them that they had no time to care for elementary human needs. It was a layman who bound up the unfortunate man's wounds, took him to an inn for care, and contributed liberally to his rehabilitation. Luke added the touch that this good neighbor was not even a Jew but a despised Samaritan. The only man not described was the one who had been robbed. That was not an oversight. His race or nationality, color or creed were irrelevant. It was quite enough that he was in need.

Many gospel words enjoin this spirit of practical helpfulness. Exhortations to almsgiving are found over and over again in the tradition. Not only should the poor be helped, but Jesus commended deeds of love to one's friends. The woman who had spent a large sum not for the poor but for precious ointment to anoint his body had done a good work. Even the smallest service, the giving of a cup of water, was remembered in the sight of God. At the judgment day, no test would stand higher than the practical helpfulness which had been shown to men. Those who had fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and visited the sick and prisoners would enter the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world. To neglect such responsibilities carried eternal consequences. The community enforced this obligation by looking upon such service as service to Christ. To receive a child or a childlike believer was to receive Christ himself. Helpfulness to the needy brother was service rendered to the heavenly Son of man. "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

The emphasis upon human service was the answer to the aspiration for greatness. That was not quenched but redirected. The pagan ideal of greatness was to lord it over others. Jesus had said, "It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you let him be your servant; and he who would be chief, slave of all." The Gospel of John portrayed Jesus as girding himself with a towel at the last supper and washing his disciples' feet. Surely that was an example of the life of one who could say, "I am in the midst of you as he that serves." This illustrated the emphasis of Jesus that the most menial service is not below the dignity of the great, but it is the evidence of his true greatness.

The exaltation of practical service to the needs of men was based upon the high evaluation of the individual in the sight of God. The smallest service to one of the brethren of Christ merited the highest reward; on the other hand, anyone who caused "one of these little ones who believe on me" to sin would meet the direst punishment. So precious was the individual in the sight of God that he sought the last erring one, though ninety and nine were safe in the fold. Their angels in heaven watched over each one. Every member of the community was a child of God and the erring must be reclaimed for him.

Hence, a further expression of love was *forgiveness*. The will to forgive seeks to break down barriers of separation and to create brotherhood. It renounces all self-righteousness. In recognition of one's own wrongdoing and need of forgiveness, it ever stands ready to forgive others. Some rabbis had insisted upon forgiveness of those who had wronged men up to three times. Others had demanded seven times. But Jesus insisted that the will to forgive should be without limit. Our prayer to God should be, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Therefore, men must forgive as often as a brother repents and asks for restoration to fellowship.

In connection with the prophetic word of Jesus to forgive without limit, the church had to work out a system of community discipline. Ethical standards could not be relaxed. If a brother sinned, first of all individuals should labor with him; if he failed to repent, they should bring the matter before the entire congregation. Obviously, Jesus had had no occasion to legislate for such situations, but Matthew did not hesitate to ascribe these directions to Christ. The church felt that it had "the mind of Christ" in extending the demand of Jesus for unlimited forgiveness to a community discipline which would deal with offenders.

3. Attitude Toward Possessions

There were two specific spheres of life concerning which extended words of Jesus were preserved. These dealt with his attitude toward *possessions* and the family. We have already emphasized the fact that Jesus did not attempt to describe an ideal economic organization of society. When one man sought a redistribution of wealth, Jesus made it the occasion for criticism of his covetousness. Because in his parables Jesus dealt with life as it was, many included reference to the economic processes of life; but this did not mean that he was teaching economics. When he told about laborers working in a vineyard from early morning until sundown, he was not approving a twelve-hour day, but recognizing that these were the conditions of toil in the Palestine of that day. When he told about slaves who doubled their master's money in his absence, that was not an approval of unlimited acquisition, but a vivid picture of the energetic greed to be seen in the lives of men. Jesus even used the story of a rascal who cheated his lord as an illustration of the need for cleverness.

The teaching of Jesus about possessions centered in his conviction that they were a dangerous peril. Mammon or wealth was the most dangerous competitor to God. Riches claimed the heart, which belonged to him only. They chained man's interest to the world which was passing, and hence were an obstacle to entrance to the kingdom of God. No man can be a slave to two masters; either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. We have noted this emphasis when dealing with the qualifications for entrance. Here we want to see what the early Christians taught on the authority of Jesus as the right thing to do with their material possessions.

One answer is to be found; they were to give their possessions away. We have seen how generously the early believers did share with one another in a spirit of love. That spirit was enforced by the words of their Master. The story was told of Zacchaeus, who not only restored twenty times more than the law required for exactions wrongfully made; he gave one half his goods to feed the poor. Current interpretations made contributions of one fifth the maximum for good works. Such generous distribution of goods was the only way to lay up treasures in heaven that would escape the destruction of moth and rust and the rapacity of thieves. The rich man who had all that this world could offer found that is was no proof of God's favor when he faced the divine judgment. Another rich man, instead of giving in alms, tore down his barns to build larger ones in order that he might enjoy his wealth. But he found that he could not take such treasure with him. The only riches that counted with God were the generous giving to others. The merit did not depend on the amount. for a poor widow who gave all that she had did more than those who contributed from their bounty. It was the spirit of boundless love that mattered.

It is hard for modern men to realize that Jesus paid no attention to the need to lay up capital and to stimulate greater production. But we cannot honestly smuggle into the ideas of Jesus conceptions of greater and greater abundance for a continuing society. This field of human interest is only one illustration of the impossibility of taking the words of Jesus to his own particular situation and making them a sufficient norm for all time. But Christians of all ages need to appreciate the truth in his warning against the peril of wealth, and his exhortations to boundless generosity as the way to remove its sting. The exhortations cannot be separated from the religious trust which had been the correlative in the teaching of Jesus. Undergirding this attitude toward wealth was a faith in God which should remove all anxious care. If God cared for the birds and the grass, he would see that his children had food and clothing. That was the ideal of the kingdom of God which early Christianity took seriously.

4. Family Life

Though there were no sayings of Jesus which dealt with the transformation of social institutions, there were many which inculcated high ideals of family life. Marriage was an indissoluble institution of God. Celibacy was not advocated as a higher state of life. It was recognized that there were some who renounced marriage because of their devotion to the work of the kingdom of God just as Jesus had done. But this was the renunciation of a good, as physical incapacity for marriage was a misfortune rather than a blessing. Children were to be valued as the models of the kingdom. Kindness done to a child was kindness done to the Lord himself. The leading symbols for man's relationship to God were taken from the family. Though the institution would not continue in the completed kingdom of God, it was the most fruitful nursery for the sacrificial love that should characterize the new life.

Nevertheless, family ties were not made the closest. Attachment to the dearest member of the family should not stand between anyone and devotion to the kingdom. It was recognized that the gospel would often bring division between father and son, mother and daughter. The family could never be the ultimate loyalty of anyone who was completely consecrated to the Father of all men. The unfortunate example within the family of Jesus himself served to emphasize the need to take a larger center of loyalty.

The maintenance of the standard of an indissoluble marriage naturally presented problems. This ideal was not proclaimed as the law of a state, but the rule of life for men and women pledged to the highest ideals and to unlimited forgiveness. We must not forget that among Jews divorce was the exclusive prerogative of the husband. Its prohibition was therefore a protection to women rather than an enslavement. Our gospel tradition shows that it was the men who were amazed at any such restriction. Why marry if they could not have a way of escape? Among Gentiles even more problems arose. These will be discussed when we come to Paul's correspondence with the church at Corinth.

5. Humility

Ethical teaching is naturally related to the particular problems which men and women are facing. What were the problems faced by a world-renouncing community which expected very shortly to reign with Christ in glory? It is clear that this situation called for a stress upon *humility*. This had been true already during the ministry of Jesus. He had proclaimed the coming of a time when God would exalt those of low degree. The poor and the humble and the meek would rule. But such a promise did not make it easier for men to be truly humble now. The desire for pre-eminence is deeply rooted in human nature. No wonder we read of conflicts among the disciples about which should be first. Unquestionably these conflicts did not die down in the early church. Struggles for leadership continued during the time of waiting for the coming kingdom.

Over and over again in the gospels we find variant formulations of one basic thought. "The last shall be first, and the first last." "If any man would be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." "He who exalts himself shall be humbled; he who humbles himself shall be exalted." "The least is the one that is great." They should not seek such a pre-eminence as that of teacher, or master, for all were brethren together. Greatness did not come through ruling over others but through service.

Luke developed this emphasis upon lowly humility and greatness through service by a series of parables. No one at a dinner should take a seat of honor; the giver of the feast might send him to the foot of the table because that was reserved for a more distinguished guest. We must remember the emphasis upon precedence at oriental dinners. On the other hand, if one chooses a lower seat, the giver of the feast may exalt him. Likewise, in giving dinners, the purpose should not be to win prestige with those who can forward our selfish ambition. We should invite the lowly who need our help, and then God will truly exalt us.

Mark gave as his central illustration of the need for humility an anecdote in which James and John, the sons of Zebedee, sought the chief seats for themselves. The rebuke from Jesus emphasized the fact that pre-eminence could come only through sacrificial service. Could they drink the cup of martyrdom and be baptized with the baptism of persecution? At the time when Mark wrote his gospel, James had already paid that price of leadership, and many modern scholars believe that this tradition indicates that John also had been baptized into the Lord's death.

6. Faithfulness

The other emphasis which was called for in the early church was upon *readiness* and *faithfulness*. The two went hand in hand. Believers must be ready for the return of the Lord at any time, but in the intervening interval they were called upon to be faithful. As time went on, a further motif had to be included, having reference to the delay of the end. We shall deal with that in a later chapter on the Christian hope. But in the early decades the stress was upon a coming which would be sudden and unexpected.

The master of a house never knows when a thief may come. He must always be ready. It was the same with those who waited for the coming of the Son of man. Since the kingdom of God was symbolized by a banquet, a meal figured in several of the parables. Luke told one to the effect that if servants were watchful and alert with their lamps burning, on his return the Lord would make them sit down and eat. Matthew told a more extended story of maidens waiting for the return of the bridegroom. Only those who were prepared could enter into the marriage feast. Likewise, only those members of the church who were morally prepared would be able to feast in the kingdom of God.

Several of the stories emphasized the responsibility of leadership. Stewards have been placed over the household during the master's absence. If they take advantage of his delay by mistreating the other servants, they will be duly punished, but according to their knowledge. Each servant has been given his due responsibility. From those to whom much has been given, much will be required. He that is faithful in a very little may be counted on to be faithful in much. But the porter who is given the task of watching the house must not fall asleep. He must be on the alert, for the Lord will return at an unexpected moment.

The most extended of these parables dealt with entrusted money. It was told in various ways. Luke has a version in which the same amount was given to all of the master's slaves, but they differed in their ability to multiply the money for him. Matthew has a version in which the amounts entrusted vary according to the ability of the slaves. From the use of the word "talent" some modern readers have been misled and have thought of various endowments or abilities. But the only ability with which the story deals is the talent of multiplying capital as rapidly as possible. Two of the slaves made one hundred per cent on their lord's money during his absence. They were faithful to the covetous self-interest of their lord and were duly rewarded. But the third simply buried his entrusted money out of fear of his own ability and his master's sternness. He was punished for his failure to serve his master's interest. It should be clear that the purpose of the story was not to show how money should be used. What Jesus thought of such devotion to covetousness is clear from his other teaching. The point of the story lies in faithfulness to the interest of an absent lord. What the interests of the kingdom of God actually are must be discovered in other teaching of Jesus. But men must be faithful to his interests as they wait for his return.

From this we may see that despite the world-renouncing attitude of the early church, their ethic had definitely positive objectives. Believers were not simply to fold their hands and wait for their salvation. They must be faithful now to the interests of Christ. They must devote themselves with alertness to the doing of his will, if they would be ready for his coming. Hence, words which probably were originally charges against the leadership of the Jews were redirected as exhortations to the early Christians. They were to hold aloft a light of truth to the world. They were to be like salt that might act as a preservative. They were like a city set upon a hill, an unhidable symbol of the presence of God. The Christian life was not a passive acquiescence as they waited for God to redeem them. It was an active devotion to the needs of individual men.

It is no accident, therefore, that the form of the so-called "golden rule" which early Christians ascribed to Jesus was stated in the positive form. Of course the expression was not original with him, for many formulations had been given before him. It is in no sense the height of Christian teaching, for it savors too much of the utilitarian spirit to sound the depths of the profound teaching of Jesus. But it does epitomize the positive ideals of life which were inseparable from devotion to Christ. "Whatever you would that men should do to you, do also to them." When men who were heirs of the kingdom of God sought to live out that ideal in practice, it led to the cultivation of a new spirit that was to transcend every law.

BIBLE READINGS

2. The Practical Meaning of Love: Mark 14:3-9; 9:41; Luke 10: 25-37; 17:3-4; 22:24-27; Matt. 18:1-22; 25:31-40; John 13:1-15.
3. Attitude Toward Possessions: Luke 12:13-34; 16:19-26; 19:1-10; Matt. 6:24; Mark 12:41-44; Luke 16:1-8.
4. Family Life: Mark 10:2-16; Matt. 19:10-12; 10:34-37.
5. Humility: Mark 9:33-37; 10:35-44; Matt. 23:8-12; Luke 14:7-14.
6. Faithfulness: Mark 13:33-37; Matt. 25:1-30; 5:13-16; 7:12; Luke 12:35-48; 19:11-28.

CHAPTER XV

JESUS IN THE NEW FAITH

From the very beginning, Christianity involved a cosmic interpretation of the person of Jesus. Until the prophet of Nazareth was set in some ultimate frame of reference, there was as yet no Christian faith. Naturally he was called "teacher" in much of the primitive tradition. But of teachers and prophets there were many. Christianity emerged from Judaism because a unique place was claimed for this teacher which could not be admitted by the Jewish leaders. If the first believers had been content to look upon Jesus as one of the great prophets of Israel there would never have been a Christian church. But they insisted that the Creator and Father of all had given him a function within his redeeming activity which was shared by no other.

1. A Cosmic Interpretation of Jesus

A cosmic interpretation of Jesus has two aspects. In stressing the importance of these interpretations for apostolic Christianity, we must not overlook the fact that these were estimates of *Jesus.* Current religious ideas of a heavenly redeemer were not simply transferred to the figure of a Galilean carpenter-rabbi. Jesus was not a human *x* about which various myths accumulated. It is true that not all early Christians attached the same importance to the traditions of the earthly life of Jesus. But if a teacher like Paul seemed to relegate a "knowledge of Christ according to the flesh" to a low plane, it was only in contrast to his central significance in the reconciling work of God. All of our knowledge about the life and teaching of Jesus was preserved by the church which at the same time preached him as Christ and Lord. Their faith was a cosmic interpretation of a particular life which had appeared among them.

We cannot review in this chapter in any adequate way his compassion for the sick, his mercy toward the sinful, his patience with human frailty, his indignation at complacent hypocrisy, or his courage amid bitter hostility. Though the evangelists did not have a biographical purpose, the material which they transmitted was so vivid and appealing that they have left us a personal portrait which men can love. Peter and the other disciples did not begin with a belief about Jesus. They were drawn by the magnetism of a compelling personality, who could be understood only in terms of the highest category which they knew. As Jesus was preached to others, they continued to interpret him as the ultimate messenger of God.

Sometimes metaphors were drawn from the everyday experiences of men. Jesus was called the "captain" or "apostle"; he was a "door" or the "light of the world." Sometimes familiar names from the Old Testament were applied to him. Jesus was the "shepherd" as well as God; he was the "high priest" rather than any functionary in Jerusalem. As Christianity moved out into the gentile world, the names for their cult deities and benefactors were naturally applied to Jesus. Neither Attis nor Nero was the Savior of the world, but Jesus of Nazareth. The psychology of this process of interpretation is more revealing than the actual titles employed. Whatever term might be used for the highest revelation of deity was claimed for Jesus. No name that could be used of anyone was too high to belong to him. For men were struggling to interpret his absolute significance for faith.

2. Jesus as Messiah

The earliest title was that of Messiah. In Greek the word was "Christos," or the Anointed One. As a title it was bound to be temporary, for hearers without Jewish training would not know what was meant by saying, "Jesus is the Christ." Hence, very soon Jesus Christ came to be used as a proper name. That name is found throughout our entire New Testament. There never was any Christian faith which did not develop from a messianic interpretation of the person of Jesus. That Jesus was the promised Christ of God was the first Christian conviction, a belief which arose with the disciples during his lifetime, and one which I believe he shared. The conviction that God had raised him from the dead confirmed their faith that Jesus was the Christ.

But how was this faith to be supported? There was almost nothing in the actual career of Jesus which corresponded to the righteous king who would throw off the heathen yoke from Israel and rule over the nations with a rod of iron. When Jews denied that Jesus was the promised Messiah, they had only to point out that he had done none of the things expected of that figure. One form of Christian reply lay in the rejoinder that Jesus had looked upon the seeking of worldly power as a temptation of the devil. Yet they did not deny that correspondence with Old Testament prophecy was important. Rather, they pointed out the many ways in which scripture had been fulfilled.

Matthew was the evangelist who carried this motif furthest. He reflects at this point his own intense interest in Jesus as the promised Messiah. Some of the passages which he quoted may come from an early book of "Testimonies" or collection of Old Testament proof texts. Jesus had been in Egypt to fulfill the prophecy of Hosea, "I have called my son out of Egypt" (11:1). His healing ministry corresponded to the predictions of the servant passages of Isaiah. His parables fulfilled the hardening prophecy of Isaiah, "By hearing you shall hear, and shall in no wise understand" (6:9). His entry into Jerusalem accorded with the words of Zechariah, "Behold, your king is coming to you, ... meek and mounted on an ass" (9:9). The children joined in hozannas, for it was written in the eighth Psalm, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings you have brought perfect praise" (8:2). When the Jews rejected Jesus, this corresponded to prophecy; but "the very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner" (Ps. 118:22). If the disciples were scattered, that had been predicted in Zechariah. To the very end of the life of Jesus events were related to Old Testament texts. John added such details as the fact that his bones were not broken lest the command concerning the Passover lamb be violated; and they pierced his side, for Zechariah had said, "They shall look on him whom they pierced" (12:10).

Much of this pious ingenuity ignored the original meaning of the Old Testament texts. The early Christians found predictions of the Messiah in many passages where it was certainly not the meaning of the original author, and where current interpretation found no reference to the Messiah. For instance, the description of the suffering servant in the book of Isaiah, who was "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities" (53:5), had not been related to the Messiah. It was the actual career of Jesus which first led to a connection. Many of these Old Testament testimonies were discovered by a devout reading of the Old Testament in the light of the known facts about Jesus. But once it was believed that his career fulfilled scripture, unremembered details could be added from these divine predictions. The two points of most vital importance lay in proving that Jesus was of the family of David, and that his birth had been at Bethlehem.

Belief in the Davidic sonship of Jesus is witnessed in many parts of the New Testament, though it is clear that Jesus himself laid no importance upon it. Matthew and Luke both offer genealogies to demonstrate that Jesus came from the correct royal line. They were compiled in complete independence of each other, and no ingenuity can harmonize their wide differences. Great emphasis had been laid since the days of Ezra on pure Jewish stock. There is no reason, therefore, to deny that such genealogies might have been treasured in devout Jewish families. But both cannot be true, and the apologetic purpose is clear. Most striking of all is the fact that in each case it is the genealogy of Joseph which is given. Since both of these evangelists denied that Joseph was the actual father of Jesus, they were hardly the original compilers of the lists. Genealogies of Joseph could not prove the Davidic sonship of Jesus if he were only the legal parent and not the actual father.

It is just as impossible to harmonize their divergent ways of reporting a birth at Bethlehem. Everyone knew that Jesus had lived in Nazareth. How could he have fulfilled the prediction of Micah that out of Bethlehem would come "the shepherd of my people Israel"? According to Matthew, Mary and Joseph had lived in Bethlehem until the murderous jealousy of Herod drove them to flee to Egypt. After the death of the king, they had feared to return there and had gone to Nazareth. Matthew does not state that they had ever lived in Galilee before; it was to fulfill the prophecy that he should be called a Nazarene that they went to that town. Luke accepted the fact that Joseph and Mary had always lived in Nazareth. He dated the birth of Jesus during a trip which the parents had taken because of the enrollment under Quirinius. The historicity of any such enrollment during the rule of Herod is extremely difficult to defend. This is no place for a review of the details of the evidence. But even if the strong objections could be met, Luke's account stands in hopeless contradiction to the one in Matthew. The stories agree in nothing but that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Modern Christians who no longer look upon the Old Testament as a mine of hidden predictions of future events will not feel that the birth of Jesus was of any different significance if it took place in Nazareth or in Bethlehem. Historical probability points strongly toward the apologetic origin of these stories. For the first Christians it seemed as important to prove his birth at Bethlehem as the Davidic sonship of Jesus.

3. Jesus as Son of Man

No one could contend that Jesus had exercised messianic rule during his lifetime. His reign belonged to the future when he would return in power as the heavenly Son of man. We have already discussed this title in the examination of the Jewish hopes, and again in the portrayal of the career of Jesus. It is striking that, except for the words of Stephen before the Sanhedrin, this phrase is never found in the New Testament except on the lips of Jesus. The testimony of Stephen paralleled that of Jesus before the Sanhedrin, that the Son of man was seated on the right hand of power.

It may be that the absence of the title in other parts of the New Testament is due to the fact that the literal Greek translation of the Aramaic *Barnasha* was meaningless to a Greek reader. Our gospels show many of the phenomena of "translation-Greek," especially in the words of Jesus. Possibly a Greek writer like Paul meant the same thing as "Son of man" when he spoke of the man from heaven or second Adam, for "Son of man" simply meant "man." This particular "man," who had been the symbol of God's people in Daniel, was the messianic ruler and judge who would inaugurate the new age.

Throughout the gospels, "Son of man" is used simply as a name for Jesus. Mark was the evangelist who particularly related the term to the necessity of Jesus to suffer. Some scholars have found the origin of this usage in the myth of a heavenly man through whose death the worlds were created. But materials are not at hand for the proof of such a thesis. What we know is that the career of Jesus gave rise to the interpretation of the necessity of the Son of man to suffer. But the one uniform testimony about the Son of man in all strands of gospel tradition was that he would come on the clouds in judgment. He was the one through whom God would judge the world. When he came with power and glory, he would gather the Elect into the kingdom of God.

Popularly, "Son of man" has been taken to refer to the humanity of Jesus and "Son of God" to his divinity. That is a complete misapprehension of the original significance of the term. It is not as a lowly member of the human race that Jesus is called Son of man. As Son of man he forgives sin and rules over the sabbath. As Son of man he gives his life as a ransom for many, and after three days is raised from the dead. As Son of man, he confesses those before God who acknowledge him before men. As Son of man he will sit on the throne of judgment dividing the sheep from the goats. Here is one of the earliest and most important interpretations of Jesus, and it is probable that it roots in part in his own words.

4. Jesus as Son of God

Paradoxical as it may sound, the title "Son of God" was originally one expressive of his humanity. It is used in the Old Testament of the people of Israel as a whole, and in the later Jewish literature of the individual pious man. Nowhere is it certainly witnessed as a title for the Messiah in pre-Christian literature. The important connection as a name for Jesus came through the fact that it was a synonym for the king. This Jewish usage is illustrated in the Gospel of John where Nathanael addresses Jesus, "You are the son of God, you are Israel's king." The two terms were identical; the man chosen as king was thereby the son of God.

The second Psalm affirmed this most clearly. It was a Psalm celebrating the ascension of the king to his throne. God said, "Thou art my Son; today have I begotten thee" (2:7). In other words, on that day the king became the son of God. "Son of God" did not mean a divine person, except as the king was the special representative of God. He was a man who had been chosen for a unique function under God.

But as the Christian faith came into wider contacts, the term took on a different significance. Sons of God were interpreted more literally in the gentile world. There it implied a divine being. In that sense, it was blasphemous in the eyes of a Jew to call Jesus the Son of God. The debates in the Gospel of John reflect this understanding of the term. There are also passages in the earlier gospels where "the Son" means more than simply the chosen theocratic ruler. After Jesus walks on the water, Matthew reports that the disciples bow in worship, exclaiming, "Thou art the Son of God." But there are other passages where "Son of God" may simply mean Messiah.

Already, in the letters of Paul, the term is used for a unique divine being. God had sent forth his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and born of woman. Believers had been called into fellowship with his Son, and they were awaiting this Son from heaven. The synoptic tradition contained sayings which spoke of "the Son" in the absolute religious sense. "No one knows the Father except the Son, and him to whom the Son reveals him." The Epistle to the Hebrews began with the affirmation that after God had spoken through many prophets, he had at the end of time spoken in a Son, who was greater than any angel. In the Fourth Gospel, the evangelist often speaks of God sending his only Son into the world, a being who in love and knowledge and will corresponded perfectly to the Father. Here the Son of God is no longer the man whom God had chosen for a particular function. He is a divine being whom God has sent into the world.

5. The Virgin Birth

But when and how did Jesus become the Son of God? Here likewise there was development in early Christian belief. There were some early Christians who dated the divine sonship of Jesus from the resurrection. God declared Jesus Son of God with power by raising him from the dead. It may be that the story of the Transfiguration represents a stage in pushing back the time of the divine adoption into the life of Jesus. But according to the theology of Mark, baptism marked the entrance of Jesus on the dignity of Son of God. Then the heavenly voice designated him, "Thou art my Son." An early group of manuscripts of Luke continue the quotation with the words of the second Psalm, "Today have I begotten thee."

But Matthew and Luke represent a very different tradition. They date the divine sonship at birth. It was not through God's declaration at some point in his historical career that Jesus became the Son of God, but the function of the male parent was taken by the Holy Spirit. Once again Matthew and Luke have entirely different stories. Matthew's is told from the standpoint of Joseph; the devout man is given divine assurance that he should not put away his espoused wife. Luke's story is related from the standpoint of Mary. She is promised a child by a miracle that will transcend that of the conception by old women like Elizabeth, the wife of Zechariah, or Sarah, the wife of Abraham.

Belief in the virgin birth of Jesus is found in no other books of the New Testament. Clearly it did not belong to the early preaching. It was not a belief which was shared by Paul, for in his eyes Jesus was a pre-existent being. He did not become the Son of God through biological events surrounding his birth, but it was through the Son of God's love that the worlds were created. It might be held that Paul had not yet heard this delicately guarded secret. But John wrote his gospel after Luke had appeared. For him likewise, Jesus was not the Son of God in a literal, biological sense. He was the Son from all eternity.

Naturally, the historian cannot speak on the historicity of birth from a virgin. The natural Jewish reply was the vicious claim that Jesus was the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier. This slander may of course be dismissed at once. Mary is the only one who could know the full truth about the birth of her son. The only criterion which the historian can apply is to ask whether during the lifetime of Jesus she showed toward this son the attitude which one would expect if he had come into the world in such a marvelous way. The only evidence from the synoptic record on this point is the incident where she joined with the brothers of Jesus in trying to take him home, when it was said "He is beside himself."

It has often been pointed out that these New Testament stories do not share in the crudity of the many legends of heroes who were looked on as sons of gods by mortal women. That is very true, and it is certain that the belief expressed here was not derived directly from any of these. We are not in position to trace just how in certain circles of Hellenistic Judaism a belief in the virgin birth of the Messiah originated. There are suggestions in the Alexandrian Jewish author Philo which indicate the trend. The nearest clue is to be found in the passage in Isaiah 7:14, which Matthew quotes, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Immanuel." In Isaiah this verse had nothing to do with the Messiah, but it referred to a sign which was promised to King Ahaz in his own lifetime. The Hebrew word *almah* which was used does not necessarily mean "virgin"; it is simply a marriageable young woman. Why then did the Septuagint translators render it by "virgin"? If the historian could answer that question, he would know more of the circle of beliefs in which the virgin birth of Jesus first arose.

6. The Servant of God

Jesus was also described as the Servant of God. Since the phrase is to be found in the sermons in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, it has often been held that this was one of the most primitive interpretations of Jesus. The word is not to be found again in the New Testament, but it does reappear in the Apostolic Fathers, Christian writings of the early second century which were not received into the New Testament canon. Hence it may be that the title came into use relatively late from the use of the word *pais* in the Septuagint in the Servant passages of Isaiah 40-55.

The original meaning of this group of passages has been much debated. The most probable view is that the figure stood for the "ideal Israel" whose sufferings were looked upon as vicarious and redemptive. We have already noted their importance in the argument from fulfillment of prophecy. There is no certain reference in the words assigned to Jesus, though some believe that the "many" in Mark 10:45 is an allusion to the phraseology of the Servant songs. Though Paul made very much of the death of Jesus, and quoted extensively from scripture, he never used any of the Servant passages in connection with the redemptive death of Jesus. That is difficult to explain if the interpretation was current at an early time. Some have thought that Greek associations with slavery made the term seem inappropriate for Paul. But in any case, he did not use the term.

But the later books of the New Testament clearly identify Christ with the servant of Isaiah 53. First Peter describes his sufferings in terms of this prophecy, and the book known as First Clement quotes the chapter in entirety. The writings of Luke reflect this emphasis upon Jesus as Servant. For Luke, it was not the cross but the resurrection that was central. Nevertheless, in the gospel he described Jesus in the words, "He was numbered with the transgressors." The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 is prefaced by the quotation of a long section of Isaiah 53. The message of Philip was that Jesus had fulfilled this prophecy. Many times Luke emphasized that the necessity for Christ to suffer was shown from scripture. The Servant of God was one term which expressed this idea.

7. Jesus as Lord

The most important expression of faith in Jesus was contained in the affirmation, "Jesus is Lord." Paul reminded the Corinthians that there were many lords in whom men believed. In Syria, Lord was the term for the cult deity to whom the devotee belonged. In Egypt the Lord was the deity who exercised cosmic sway. It was natural also for orientals to refer to the divine emperor of Rome as Lord. But Greek-speaking Jews had a much closer background for applying this name to Jesus. Throughout the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament the divine name, Jehovah, or more correctly Yahweh, was rendered by *kyrios* or Lord. Since the divine name was too holy to utter, the custom had arisen of pronouncing *Adonai* (my lord) instead of *Yahweh*. The text of the Septuagint was actually made to read "Lord." Hence when Jesus was called "the Lord," it signified more than the fact that he stood for the Christian in the place which other devotees gave to Isis, or Adonis, or Nero. It was the name which scripture gave to God himself. As a form of address, the word might mean nothing more than "sir." But *the* Lord meant the God to whom devotion was pledged.

How early was Jesus called "the Lord"? That is one of the insoluble problems in the twilight period of the beginnings of Christianity. There was a vast difference between waiting for Jesus as the Son of man who would return in judgment, and honoring him as the present Lord of the church. Luke puts the term in the mouth of Peter at his first sermon, but it is unlikely that it began that early. But it was already found in Aramaic-speaking sections of the church. Paul records their prayer, *"Maranatha,"* "Our Lord, come." Luke is the only evangelist who regularly called Jesus during his earthly life "the Lord." Throughout all of the rest of the New Testament, except in the epistles of John, one of the most frequent designations is, "Jesus Christ, our Lord."

It is in the Pauline epistles that the word "Lord" is applied to Jesus most frequently. Sometimes we cannot be certain whether the apostle is referring to Jesus or to God, but that only illustrates how closely he joined them. In one of his letters, he quotes a hymn to the pre-existent Christ. Instead of imitating the rebellious pride of Adam or Satan, he had emptied himself. As a result of his humble obedience to death, God had highly exalted him, and given him the name that was above every name—that of *Lord.* Hence, the central Christian confession was, "Jesus is Lord." He was now the heavenly Master who should command the complete allegiance of the believer. Jesus was not only "our Lord." God had subjected all things to him, so that every knee in heaven and on earth and under the earth should bow before him. Though Christ belonged to God, no one else could stand beside him as Lord.

In viewing these religious evaluations of Jesus, we must recognize that they expressed the language of devotion rather than of systematic intellectual reflection. Theories of the person of Christ were not formulated. When the language was that of the adoption of a man as son of God, the implications of that position were not worked through. When the language was that of a pre-existent being, his relation to God was not elaborated. These problems of formal Christology remained for the future. The earliest Christians were only intent on expressing the significance of Jesus for their faith. Amid all of the variety of interpretations which were followed one belief was constant: Jesus occupied a unique function in the revealing and redeeming activity of God. No one else could stand beside him. He was the "only begotten Son of God."

BIBLE READINGS

1. A Cosmic Interpretation of Jesus: John 4:42; 8:12; 10:7, 11; Heb. 3:1.
2. Jesus as Messiah: Matt. 4:1-11; 3:15; 4:15; 8:17; 13:13-15; 21:4-5, 16; John 19:36-37; II Tim. 2:8; Mark 12:35-37; Matt. 1:1-17; 2:19-23; Luke 3:23-38; 2:1-7.
3. Jesus as Son of Man: Acts 7:56; I Cor. 15:45-47; Matt. 25:31; Mark 2:10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9; 10:45; 13:26; 14:62.
4. Jesus as Son of God: John 1:49; 10:36; 17:1; 19:7; I Thess. 1:10; Gal. 4:4; Rom. 1:4; 8:3; Heb. 1:2-3; Matt. 14:33; 11:27; Mark 1:11; 9:7; 13:32; 15:39.
5. The Virgin Birth: Matt. 1:18–2:18; Luke 1:26-56; 2:1-20; Mark 3:21, 31-35.
6. The Servant of God: Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27-30; 8:32-33; Luke 22:37; I Pet. 2:21-25; I Clem. 16.
7. Jesus as Lord: Luke 7:13; 10:1; Acts 2:36; I Cor. 12:3; 16:22-23; Phil. 2:5-11.

Part IV

THE EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH

CHAPTER XVI

THE BACKGROUND OF GENTILE FAITH

THE world into which Paul and the other Christian missionaries carried their gospel was a world which had been unified by Roman power. During the latter days of the republic the eastward march of empire had begun. Macedonia had become a Roman province in 146 B.C., and most of Asia Minor and Syria followed, until the region to the Euphrates was controlled from the banks of the Tiber. Still further to the east lay the threat of Parthia, but during the first century the provinces of the empire enjoyed a Roman peace.

1. OUTLINE OF POLITICAL EVENTS

Augustus (27 B.C.-A.D. 14) had restored order after the period of civil wars during which Caesar, Antony, and Pompey had contended for power. He established in principle a dual sovereignty with the Roman Senate. Each ruled over certain provinces. The Senate appointed proconsuls who served for a year over the more established and peaceful areas. The imperial provinces were usually the more recent and border provinces; here procurators and legates ruled at the pleasure of the emperor.

Tiberius (14-37), the adopted son of Augustus, held the principate at the time of the ministry of Jesus. He was succeeded by *Gaius,* nicknamed *Caligula* (37-41) by his legionnaires. At first he reversed many of the autocratic policies of Tiberius. But soon he claimed divine honors as the grandson of Augustus. We shall see in our discussion of the imperial worship how he came into clash with the Jewish people by his demand that his statue be set up in the Temple at Jerusalem.

It was during the reign of his successor, *Claudius* (41-54), that we first hear of Christian expansion in the wider Roman Empire. Later Roman historians gave him a very black name, but modern classical scholars are rehabilitating his administration through the study of the nonliterary sources of information. He stopped the waste under Caligula and took more and more authority into his own hands. Through his secretariat of freedmen he approached closer to the outward form of monarchy. His expulsion of the Jews from Rome is mentioned in Acts 18:2. It may have affected, however, only the Christian Jews.

Nero (54-68) ascended the throne at the age of 17. His name is also blackened by the Roman historians, and Christian writers condemned him as the first persecutor. He murdered his mother, banished his first wife, Octavia, and married in her stead Poppea. His monstrous egoism found expression in the impetus given to the imperial cult, especially in the east. In July of A.D. 64 a terrible fire broke out in Rome and it burned for nine days. Nero was made the scapegoat by an enraged population. Tacitus says that it was to divert attention from himself that he persecuted the Christians as guilty of incendiarism. The army turned against him in A.D. 68 and a new period of civil war was inaugurated until finally Vespasian established himself as emperor in A.D. 70.

2. Social Conditions in the Empire

These political events in the capital city were not of primary importance to the common man. Under the empire, political life was nonexistent. It is the social, economic, and religious conditions which bear more directly upon the origins of Christianity. The situation was far from uniform, but the differences were less between the different countries than between city and country. The real contrast was between the luxury classes in the big cities, where degeneration had set in, and the healthier life of the peasant masses and the simple tradespeople of the cities. The literary knowledge, upon which historians once had to depend exclusively, largely dealt with conditions among the upper classes. But the papyri, ostraca, and other remains have helped to fill in the picture of the common people.

It was not among degenerate upper classes nor among barbarous country folk that Christianity had its start, for Paul never went outside the cities where Greek was spoken. These had well-paved streets, and running water to at least the second floor. We must think in terms of such city dwellers as Lydia at Philippi, Jason at Thessalonica, and Titius Justus, who lived next to the synagogue at Corinth.

A very heavy percentage of the population were *slaves*. Though the industrial slaves in mines and on the landed estates were cruelly exploited, the lot of the average city slave was not especially hard. Many converts were to come from freedmen and slaves. Likewise, one is impressed with the number of women mentioned in early Christianity. Among Greeks they stood on a much lower plane than among Jews or Romans. Exposure of children was a frequent practice.

An important feature of ancient life preparing the way for Christian churches was the large number of clubs and associations. Some of these were primarily social, but the *thiasoi* were religious societies. To many pagans, a Christian church would appear simply as another of these societies that aimed to satisfy the gregarious impulses of men. The organizational practices in these societies doubtless had their influence on the developing organization of the church. These had their *episcopoi* (bishops) as well as the church.

One of the biggest aids to the early Christian mission was the comparative *ease of travel*. Fine Roman roads, usually ten feet in breadth, radiated out from Rome and traversed the leading provinces. Though "perils of robbers" persisted, travelers could count on safety of movement as they walked fifteen to eighteen miles a day or rode at a somewhat swifter pace from station to station. Though there were inns at frequent intervals, the reputation of these was such that hospitality was a virtue valued in the communities between which prophets were to travel.

Ships were built up to 180 feet in length, 1,200 tons in displacement, and carrying as high as 600 passengers. They sailed the Mediterranean without fear of piracy. Paul started for Rome on a ship carrying 276 persons. The speed of their voyages depended upon the wind. But such was the efficiency of the means of communication that a merchant could project long trips with a confidence which was not to be duplicated again until modern times.

Over these arteries of commerce a heavy *trade* was carried on. Corn was brought from Egypt; glass and silk came from Syria; textiles and dyes from Asia Minor. Imports were brought even from Arabia, India, and China. Though the absence of large-scale banking was a limiting factor in commerce, the picture in Revelation 18 gives a vivid portrayal of a highly developed economic life.

3. Popular Religion

The world in which the gospel was first preached was very far from being a spiritual vacuum. It was, as Paul is represented as saying at Athens, "a very religious" world. Though it is true that skepticism and atheism were to be found among the upper classes, the mass of people was not affected. Their religion was *polytheistic* and *idolatrous*. It is impossible for a modern man to obtain any idea of the religious hold of Zeus and Apollo and Aphrodite from the reading of ancient myths or from seeing classical statuary. One could never dream of the religious value of Roman Catholic saints from a collection of statues. That so many temples were built is proof of the continued hold of the ancient forms of worship. The ancient gods were not dead, for human need still sought supernatural aid.

Idolatry always creates vested economic interests. We read in Acts 19:24 ff. that the makers of silver shrines of Artemis became concerned at the spread of the gospel and stirred up a riot against Paul and his friends. If the worship of the great goddess should decline, many businesses would suffer. This Artemis was not the chaste Greek goddess but a wild mountain mother deity. This is but one example of the widespread *identification of deities*. When Paul and Barnabas were mistaken for Zeus and Hermes, the reference was doubtless to local gods which had become identified with these Olympian divinities.

Most men are religious for quite selfish reasons. They are not servants of God, but they desire gods to serve them. The lowest form of expression is that of *magic*. The papyri show how many books of magic were circulated with formulas for all purposes. Men could avoid disaster through these. The background was a fatalism due to widespread belief in astrology. Through magic one could secure protection. Augustus collected and burned over two thousand books of magic. Paul was instrumental in initiating such a bonfire in Ephesus; we are told that the books were valued at fifty thousand pieces of silver.

Supernatural *miracles* were everywhere presupposed. The temples of Asclepius were full of the votive offerings of those who had been healed by the god. The large Asclepieion excavated at Pergamum in Asia Minor shows how closely religion and health and amusement could be united at a high-class ancient "spa." It is no wonder that people brought handkerchiefs to touch Paul in order that they might be healed. *Oracles* were still universally believed in. Hence it is not strange that at Philippi Paul came across men who were exploiting a girl who was supposed to have a spirit of divination. This, too, touched the pocketbook of paganism and took Paul to prison. We read that she followed Paul and his companions, addressing them as "servants of the Most High God." That name is frequently found in ancient writings.

4. THE IMPERIAL CULT

At Thessalonica, the capital of the province of Macedonia, we read that a crowd brought the following accusation against Paul's friends. "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also . . . . and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." This is the first contact with the imperial worship which is recorded in the New Testament. The divinity of the king was an ancient oriental belief. It has been well said that Alexander the Great first made it believable. At Rome, patriotism had early been cultivated as a religion. Sacrifice was made to the genius of Rome. The first definite personification came in the worship of the spirit of Julius Caesar.

Augustus revived this as a means of giving religious unity to the empire. We may illustrate this by the words in which the proconsul recommended to the provincial assembly of Asia in 9 B.C. that the new beginning of the year should be the birthday of the divine emperor.

> Since the providence who orders our lives has crowned our existence with the highest ornament in care and zeal, since it brought forth Augustus, whom it filled with every virtue for the blessing of men, as a Savior for us and our descendants, who ended war and orders all things; and since Caesar's appearance has exceeded the hopes of

previous time because he not only exceeded the Benefactors of men living before him, but took every hope from the future, the birthday of the God was the first message of joy going out from him. (W. Dittenberger, *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae,* Leipzig, 1905, II, 458.)

Gaius Caligula and Nero were the next emperors to emphasize their divinity. We find them called "Son of God," "Savior," and "Lord." First in the book of Revelation, written during the reign of Domitian, does the clash between church and state become prominent. Here was a phase of life, however, where the Christian church could never compromise. An emperor could not be added to their pantheon any more than the Jew could make the least concession at this point.

In A.D. 39 a statue of Caligula in Jamnia was torn down by some Jews. When word reached the mad emperor, he ordered that in retaliation another should be set up in the Temple at Jerusalem. The Jewish population both in Jerusalem and in the diaspora were inflamed by the fearful prospect. The governor of Syria, the highest authority in the Near East, delayed as long as he could. Meanwhile, Agrippa I, who had been a close friend of Caligula in earlier days, strove to have the order rescinded. Fortunately for the peace of Palestine, Caligula died and was succeeded by the more temperate Claudius. The excitement caused by this anticipated desecration seems to be mirrored in some of the apocalyptic portions of the New Testament. When Paul spoke of antichrist setting himself up in the Temple, he may have had this in mind, and the little apocalypse in Mark may also reflect it.

5. Religious Philosophy

Paul and his fellow missionaries would never have appeared to be in competition with temple priests nor purveyors of magic nor officials in charge of the imperial cult. But they were certainly confused with the wandering philosophical teachers. Some of the rhetorical devices of Paul are similar to those employed in the stoic-cynic propaganda. When he disclaimed any use of flattery or financial designs upon his converts, he assumed comparison with these wandering philosophical teachers. Apollonius of Tyana is the best known of these because of the legendary life which was written by Philostratus. The picture which the Acts of the Apostles gives of religious discussions in the Agora of Athens is one that is true to life. Luke particularly mentions the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, then the most important of the schools.

The *Epicurean* philosophy was a materialistic atomism. It held that the soul was a compound which dissolved at death, though the material elements of which it was composed might be indestructible. Though gods may exist, they have nothing to do with the world. They are the products rather than the upholders of the order of nature. From the philosophical standpoint Epicureanism served as a foe of superstition and religion. Its ethical teaching did not exalt a base hedonism, but a rational pursuit of pleasure.

Stoicism taught a pantheistic monism. Matter was endowed with reason. God was a fiery ether that permeated all reality. This immanent divinity was in all men. The idea that there is a spark of divinity dwelling in man comes from Stoicism. It is very different from the biblical view that man is a creation of God and made in his image. The Stoics usually held that this "spark" would be reabsorbed into the everlasting whole.

The beginning of Christianity fell in the period of the Middle Stoa, which stood under the influence of Posidonius. He had been instrumental in bringing a new religious note into Stoicism. He held that all was created by the immanent spirit of God, which unfolded in the world of appearance as countless divinities. The old polytheistic gods thus became demons; the old myths were allegorized and became part of the beneficent world order, veils mercifully drawn over the eyes of the common man. Hence, in contrast to Epicureanism, Stoicism did not present a vigorous challenge to superstition.

In addition to this mystical Stoicism there was the ethical Stoicism found in Seneca and Epictetus. This was a stern doctrine of duty which found its ideal in detachment. The wise man might exercise benevolence toward his brethren, but he was not to show love or pity or sympathy. The supreme good was to be found in a state of inner tranquillity. But Stoicism did have a lofty cosmopolitan ideal. It would abolish all human differences through the individual's rising above them; slaves were made by deficiencies in character, not by barter.

These various philosophical teachers sought to cultivate the moral education of the soul and a deepening of the inner life of man. The Neo-Pythagoreans called for asceticism, but the Greek spirit was on the whole life-affirming. Yet all agreed that only the wise man could be truly free and noble. When Paul wrote to Corinth that the Greeks sought wisdom, he was truly interpreting their highest aspiration.

6. MYSTERY RELIGIONS

But philosophy always has a limited clientele. Of those who no longer found religious satisfaction in the old official gods of paganism more turned to the cults that came from the orient. These "Mysteries" touched the chord of emotional need for many. The cults were based on the vegetation myths of the death of nature in the fall and its resurrection in the spring. This was dramatically portrayed, and in this later time, the benefits of the Mystery were extended from the world of nature to human nature. Sacred banquets and ablutions were included in some of these cults, but our information is quite meager and an exact description of the meaning of these rites is wanting. Whatever the deep mysteries were, they have not been divulged for us.

In the Eleusinian Mystery in Greece, Demeter was the mother goddess who mourned her daughter Persephone. In Phrygia, Cybele was the mother goddess and Attis the young man she mourned. During the time of Claudius a great mystery drama was held in Rome from March 15 to 27. During the sacred dance it was customary to make self-inflicted wounds as part of the sorrow for Attis. On the following day, delirious joy replaced this grief. In Syria, the goddess was Astarte and the god Tammuz. Recent Old Testament study has emphasized the place of this fertility cult through the centuries and its influence even within the Old Testament. The dying and rising god was a widespread phenomenon of the ancient world.

The best known of these Mysteries is the *Isis* cult. Its original home was in Egypt, where her consort was either Serapis or Osiris. Though originally the ceremonies were only for the dead, in Hellenistic times the cult had been adapted for the living. We know more about the initiation because Apuleius included an account in his book *Metamorphoses,* or *The Golden Ass.* We read of grand processions with musicians, initiates, priests bearing the models of the altars, and gods "that deigned to walk with the feet of men." When the time of initiation was finally appointed by the goddess, there was for the initiate a bath of purification, a solemn charge to secrecy, and ten days of abstinence from meat and wine. On the night of the initiation he was given a new linen robe and taken to the most secret and sacred place of the temple. Though he says that he cannot tell what transpired, he does write:

> Thou shalt understand that I approached near unto hell, even to the gates of Proserpine, and after that I was ravished throughout all the elements, I returned to my proper place: about midnight I saw the sun brightly shine, I saw likewise the gods celestial and the gods infernal, before whom I presented myself and worshiped them. (Loeb Classical Library, Book XI, p. 581.)

Feasting followed for several days, after which the hero was free to depart with his newly found blessings.

In the study of these ancient Mysteries, modern scholars have been eager to discover influences on later Christian developments. Hence there has been interest in the *Dionysian cult,* where the "eating of the god" was still practiced. Participation in the life of the god was secured by drinking the blood and eating the raw flesh of the victim in which the god was supposed to be incarnated. The much more spiritual doctrine of *Orphism* used Dionysian legends. There was Orphic influence upon both Heraclitus and Plato, and the later Christian presentations of hell, such as in the Apocalypse of Peter, were influenced by the Orphic representations. According to their myth. Zagreus was killed by the Titans, but his heart was saved and restored to life as Dionysus. From this murder the whole of mankind inherited a kind of corruption. The soul is a prisoner in the body and can escape only through death. But it is possible to anticipate this reunion of the divine within man with the god by virtue of the mystery which delivers the soul from its bodily prison.

The closest analogies to Christian practices are to be found in *Mithraism.* It came from Persia, and was to become very popular in Rome; but it was the second century before it came to full prominence. Originally a subordinate deity, Mithra had come to be looked upon as the god of light and truth and the opponent of evil. The central myth was of Mithra slaying the bull. From the body of the victim sprang all of the useful herbs and plants that cover the earth. From the spinal cord sprang wheat, and from its blood the vine that produces the sacred drink, for they had a sacramental meal of bread and wine. Initiates had a sign burned on their forehead and the ceremony was called "sacramentum." There was a baptism at which honey was put on the tongue and hands of the candidate.

The aim of all of these cults was to bring *salvation* to men. But a prominent trend of religion was to offer salvation through knowledge or *"gnosis."* This was not a rationally tested knowledge but revelation or illumination. Here the older Greek spirit was submerged by the oriental distrust of reason. Man was looked upon as subject to the personified planets and the elements of the universe. It is interesting that the planetary week conquered the empire just ahead of Christianity. Release from this imprisonment of the soul might come through the ascent of the soul to its natural home. This was made possible through possession of the correct Gnosis. This general conception opened the way for elaborate schemes of cosmic speculation. These are best known to us through the later Christian Gnostics, but before them there probably was a pre-Christian Gnosticism, yet the character of this can only be surmised from the later sources. It may be that in the *Hermetica,* tractates 1 and 13, we have expressions which are essentially pre-Christian.

7. THE HELLENIZATION OF JUDAISM

Christianity was not the first monotheistic religion to come into contact with these spiritual movements of the Graeco-Roman world. Nearly four million Jews were scattered over the empire, which contained a population of fifty-five million. Matthew testifies to the zeal of their propaganda in the picture of the Pharisee who traversed the sea and land to make one proselyte. These Jews had the proud consciousness that they were "a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth." Since every Jewish synagogue was the center of a circle of God-fearing Gentiles, some contacts with the religious currents of the time were inevitable. What stimuli to reflection had come to the more receptive Jewish minds? What speculative developments were going on among these Hellenistic Jews? Had any of them absorbed ideas from the Mysteries as earlier Jews had been influenced by their environment?

Certainly a book like the Wisdom of Solomon reveals the acceptance of Greek ideas of immortality as well as a strong polemic against heathen forms of worship. Gnostic speculation was surely to be found among Jews, though we have no means of knowing how popular it was. *Philo,* the cultivated Alexandrian Jew, wrote a long series of books interpreting Jewish faith in terms that owed much to Greek philosophy. Yet we do not know how large a circle he represented. It was the later Christian theologians who preserved his writings, not the Jews. He may have been quite an isolated phenomenon in the first century and few followed him in his synthesis of religious cultures.

But one thing should not be forgotten: early Christian missionaries had predecessors in Judaism in formulating an attitude toward the Hellenistic religious currents of the time. Though the forms of Judaism were relatively fixed, she could not be completely impervious to her environment. Hellenistic ideas inevitably left their mark on her. It was even less possible for a growing and developing faith like Christianity to remain entirely untouched. Though Christianity was born from the womb of Judaism, the gentile environment in which its youth was spent left inescapable marks on the new religious organism. Those who try to deny that fact seem to forget that the Christian writer who stresses most the revealed character of the faith also wrote of a light which enlightens every man. The absorption of tributaries into the gospel began at a very early time; they were brought by the first converts from the Graeco-Roman world.

BIBLE AND SOURCE READINGS

1. Outline of Political Events: Acts 18:2.
2. Social Conditions in the Empire: Rev. 18:11-20.
3. Popular Religion: Acts 14:11-13; 19:19, 23-27.
4. The Imperial Cult: Acts 17:6-8; Rev. 13:11-15.
5. Religious Philosophy: Acts 17:16-21.
7. The Hellenization of Judaism: Matt. 23:15; Rom. 2:18-21; Wisdom of Solomon 13:14; Philo, *Against Flaccus* 5–6.

CHAPTER XVII

CARRYING THE GOSPEL TO EUROPE

Paul is the only one of the apostles whose missionary campaigns we are able to follow. The first took him to Arabia, Cilicia, and Syria. It was a period of apprenticeship, during which he was finding himself in the Christian movement. The second campaign with Barnabas and John Mark took him through Cyprus and southern Asia Minor. It was a time when he rose to outstanding leadership. We have now reached the point in the story of Christian beginnings when we must follow him to Europe. His third campaign was destined to reverse the march which Alexander had made from Macedonia four centuries earlier. Paul went to conquer Europe not with the sword, but with the gospel of Christ. He went not with an army, but with two co-workers, Silvanus and Timothy.

1. The Itinerary

Paul's itinerary across Asia Minor has been the subject of endless dispute. First, he revisited Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium. This time he came through the Cilician Gates across the Taurus Mountains. At Lystra, Timothy joined the party. Since there would be many contacts with Jews, Paul had this half-Gentile circumcised. Then we read, "They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia." Asia means the Roman province by that name which lay to the west; but to what did Luke refer by "the region of Phrygia and Galatia" which Paul traversed *because* he did not go to Asia? The account goes on, "When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia." When the Spirit of Jesus did not permit that, they passed by

Mysia and came to Troas, only a few miles south of the Troy made famous by Homer.

The question at issue is this: Did this itinerary take the party through communities in the north or west of the province of Galatia? If so, did Paul stop and found the churches to which he was later to send the Letter to the Galatians, or was that sent to Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, cities in the southern part of the province by that name? The question is not important enough to detain the general reader with an examination of the detailed arguments advanced on each side. Personally, I think that the "north Galatian" theory is the more probable. We should allow for a halt somewhere in northern or western Galatia. Here, it would appear from the letter, Paul preached the gospel "because of an infirmity of the flesh." Though Luke tells us nothing of the circumstances, there are so many other demonstrable gaps in his story that we need not be surprised at this omission.

At Troas, Paul had a vision of a man who said, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." At this point, the author of Acts falls into the first person "we," indicating that he was drawing upon a travel diary. After landing at Neapolis they made their first stop at Philippi, named for Philip of Macedon. Here Paul founded a strong church which was to receive one of his warmest and most affectionate letters. He himself referred to being shamefully treated at Philippi; Acts described this as a flogging and imprisonment. The party moved on from there along the Via Egnatia, a short route to Rome across the Adriatic to Brundisium. Passing through Amphipolis, the capital of the eastern section of the province, and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, known in modern times as Salonika. Luke refers to three sabbaths spent teaching in the synagogue, but the ministry of Paul must have lasted considerably longer from the description of his work which Paul gives in his letters.

Jewish opposition compelled Paul to move on to Beroea, modern Verroia, lying forty miles to the southwest and up in the mountains. For a time the work went favorably, but Jews from Thessalonica once more stirred up trouble and Paul had to leave again. It is not clear whether Paul made the trip to Athens by sea or by land, but Silas and Timothy were able to stay behind for a time. At Athens the emphasis is laid on the meeting with philosophers in the market place rather than with the Jews in the synagogue. While a few converts were made, nothing is said of a church; no letter was written to Athens. Paul wrote that he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica from Athens (I Thess. 3:2), a notation which is difficult to harmonize with Luke's description of the movements of the party. He reports that Silas and Timothy first rejoined Paul at Corinth.

It was at Corinth that Paul found the most fertile field for his work. The city had been destroyed in 146 B.C. but was refounded one hundred years later by Caesar as a Roman colony. It quickly grew to be an important trade city, straddling the route between the East and Rome. A few miles to the east stood Cenchreae, with a good harbor on the Aegean Sea, and Lechaeum served as its harbor on the Corinthian Gulf. Cargoes were either carried across the isthmus or the ships were dragged on rollers in order to avoid the long and dangerous trip around the southern tip of Greece. Above the city towered Acrocorinth, rising 1,800 feet above the city. Here stood the Temple of Aphrodite with its thousand courtesans, a symbol of the wild life of the city. The Isthmian games were another of the city's attractions. Though it is unlikely that Paul would attend, he did not hesitate to draw upon its contests for figures of speech.

Paul records that he came to them "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." But he was soon encouraged by making contact with a fellow tentmaker from Pontus by the name of Aquila. He and his wife, Prisca, had recently been expelled from Rome by Claudius. Paul lived with them until the home of Titius Justus provided a more convenient residence, after Paul had been excluded from the Jewish synagogue. For eighteen months his work continued uninterrupted, and reached far out into the province of Achaia. It is clear from Paul's later correspondence with the church at Corinth that a strong Christian community was gathered. It included important men like Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, and Stephanas, "the first fruits of Achaia." Yet on the whole Paul had to say that not many of the wise, not many men of influence, not many of the "well-born" were called. Slaves and freedmen comprised the bulk of the converts.

2. Paul's Missionary Methods

This missionary campaign presents many contrasts to the foreign missions of our own time. First, the little party did not receive financial support from any "home base." Neither did Paul make it a practice to accept gifts from his converts. The church at Philippi was apparently the one exception. Paul worked night and day with his own hands so that he would not be a burden to any and might set them an example of work. He would not have it said of him that his preaching was a cloak for covetousness. He took advantage of no one. At the same time he had no financial advantages to offer to his converts. There was never any danger of attracting "rice Christians." No time had to be given to the buying of property or the subsidizing of "native preachers." Paul did not come with the promise of improving men's economic lot, but to bring them news of salvation.

A modern missionary is expected to learn the culture and history of the people to whom he is sent. He is supposed to study their religions in order to make a point of contact with them. It would be a mistaken illusion to picture Paul sitting down to study the philosophies and religions of the Graeco-Roman world. Undoubtedly he learned much, particularly through his gentile converts. When they came into the church they brought many of their old ideas with them. Doubtless Paul appropriated more from his environment than he ever realized. But when he spoke of becoming "all things to all men" it was in an illustration of the limitations he imposed upon himself. He was quite unconcerned about the culture of men. He could travel through some of the finest scenery in the world, but he never mentioned it. All of the art of Athens only drew the comment that the city was full of idols.

Paul was in a hurry. About seven years lay between the beginning of this campaign and his arrest in Jerusalem. Morrison, the first Protestant missionary to China, worked seven years to baptize one convert. Rarely would a modern missionary think of permitting baptism before six months' work in a community. According to the data supplied by Luke, Paul stayed that long only in two centers. During these seven years he evangelized three provinces. He was not seeking the slow transformation of civilization by Christian ideals. His slogan was, "The evangelization of the world in this generation," for he expected no other generation in which it would be possible.

Since the letters were written to established churches, Luke is our only direct source of information for his missionary procedure. He pictures Paul as beginning regularly in the synagogue. He sought a foothold for his work through those best prepared for his message. Some have doubted this early preaching in the synagogues because Paul's letters are silent about it. But Luke does not claim that Paul was able to stay more than a few sabbaths before he was turned out. Since pioneer missionaries today begin with those best prepared, why should not Paul have sought this contact with the God-fearers who surrounded the synagogues in the diaspora? If Paul drew off many of these to accept his message, there would be added reason for the hostility of the Jews. Paul had not yet given up all hope of winning at least some of his own countrymen.

3. Luke's Picture of the Mission

Though we are grateful to Luke for preserving so much information about this campaign, it must be confessed that he fails to give a very adequate picture of the missionary work. The isolated anecdotes and general summaries leave many of our questions unanswered. After telling of the beginning of the work in the synagogue and usually where Paul lodged, Luke leaves it largely to our imagination to picture how the communities were organized and the converts trained. A few individuals are named, but there is no hint of the size of the congregations which were gathered. We look in vain through the pages of Acts for any consideration of the difficult problems in building Christian character in the lives of these former pagans. The dissensions and controversies revealed by the Corinthian and Galatian letters would be unknown to us if we depended entirely on Luke for our picture of the apostolic church.

It is true that Luke seems to stress the personal suffering of Paul in carrying on his mission. He was beaten and imprisoned in Philippi, but the praetors came to apologize the next morning. At Thessalonica Paul was threatened by a mob, but only his friends actually had to face the danger. Paul was removed from

Beroea before his own life was endangered. At Athens Paul met scorn rather than persecution, and only toward the end of Paul's stay at Corinth was he brought before the proconsul, Gallio. An inscription dates the year of his administration as beginning in August A.D. 51 (or 52). But Gallio paid no attention to the charges of the Jews. Would that he had concerned himself with the case, and left a report of the examination of the charges against Paul!

But serious as this opposition was, it is clear from Paul's own letters that it falls far short of being an adequate picture of his sufferings. About three years later he was dealing in whimsical boasts to the Corinthians that he had suffered more for the gospel than any of their other teachers. He was a servant with

> far more imprisonments, with many more beatings, and often in danger of death. Five times I have received at the hand of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea. (II Cor. 11:23-25.)

It is apparent from this that Luke does not use strong enough words to paint the obstacles which Paul had to meet.

4. The Message According to Acts

Luke does try to describe the missionary message of Paul. He gives an extended summary of a synagogue sermon at Antioch of Pisidia and also a transcript of messages to heathen audiences at Lystra and at Athens. But a careful comparison of these with the letters of Paul fails to reveal much that is characteristic of the apostle. None of these sermons comes in the "we-sections" of Acts. Since it was the custom of Greek historians to compose appropriate speeches to put into the mouth of their characters, the reports which Luke gives must be analyzed with this practice in mind.

The sermon at Antioch is of a type similar to those assigned to Peter in the first part of Acts. Paul is represented as making contact with his Jewish hearers through reference to God's care for Israel in the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan. The historical survey stopped abruptly with David, and the speaker jumped over to David's son, the promised Savior. Despite the witness of John the Baptist, the rulers at Jerusalem had rejected the Christ.

In demanding his death, they were only fulfilling scripture. But God had raised him from the dead. This resurrection was proved by the testimony of many witnesses and also by scripture. It certainly is surprising that Paul should preach about the resurrection of Jesus without including himself among the witnesses. At the end, however, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed through Christ and an acquittal which was not possible through the law. Looking back over the sermon, one must confess that while Paul might have said these things, it does not recapture his distinctive message.

The circumstances at Lystra were so unusual that we could hardly expect Paul's words to cover much of his gospel. He was more intent on halting the priest of Zeus from offering sacrifices to Barnabas and himself than on making converts. Paul insisted that they were men of the same human nature as others. God had permitted the nations to walk in their own ways, but he had not left himself without a witness. The world of physical nature revealed his providential care. Though these words show a much more generous and optimistic attitude than Romans 1, it is conceivable that the situation seemed to call for them there.

Much more important is the sermon at Athens. This likewise was a very special occasion, and Luke hardly meant to imply that this was a usual missionary sermon. Philosophical teachers in the market place had accused Paul of setting forth strange gods because he preached Jesus and the resurrection. Paul was then brought to the Areopagus. This might be the city Council, but there is little in what follows that suggests a trial. The other possibility is that Paul was taken to the Hill of Ares, a rocky promontory not far from the Acropolis, where murder hearings were held. That would have provided greater quiet than the bustling Agora.

Instead of taking as his point of departure the experiences of Israel, Paul called attention to an altar inscribed to the Unknown God. We have reports of such with the word in the plural, but not in the singular. Five hundred years earlier, Epimenides had driven a flock of sheep through the city in order to stop an epidemic. Where one sheep would stop, he would set up an altar and sacrifice to the "fitting deity," unknown though he might be. It is interesting that the quotation, "In him we live and move and have our being," was ascribed to this same Epimenides.

Paul drew monotheistic conclusions from the inscription and proceeded to proclaim the one whom they ignorantly worshiped. He was the God of creation who was not contained in temples. He did not need any material cult nor could he be represented by any material object. Instead of emphasizing God's care for Israel, Paul insisted that he had made of one every nation of men, having set their boundaries and times. It was implanted in them that they should seek after God. This did not refer to the moral will of men but to intellectual thought. This seeking after God was made possible by the fact that we live by God and are his offspring, conclusions which were enforced by quotations from the Greek poets.

Thus far the ideas paralleled closely the popular philosophy of the time, and were similar to the natural theology in the Jewish Wisdom of Solomon and the later Christian apologists. But the position is markedly different from that taken by Paul when he wrote that "the world through its wisdom did not know God." When Paul wrote to the Romans that God had given men up in punishment to their terrible vices, he certainly did not think that "the times of ignorance God overlooked." Still, the possibility must be held open that on this one occasion Paul tried to make a point of contact with his audience in this way. His real missionary message did not begin until he came to the demand for repentance in view of the day when God would judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he had appointed. But such a manifestation of God in history was foolishness to the Greeks and they turned away in scorn.

5. PAUL'S MISSIONARY MESSAGE

We must then depend on Paul's own letters for the distinctive gospel which he preached. It was a development of the apostolic message rather than a revival of the teaching of Jesus. Paul did not deal in philosophical teaching about the unity of God nor spend much time in arguing against the absurdities of idolatry. Most of his hearers had already been drawn toward monotheism. Nor was Paul what we would call a hell-fire preacher. Though his message was announced against a background of judgment, Paul did not lay the emphasis on the pains of punishment. The penalty for men's sins was to be found in the destructive practices of their present lives.

The heart of Paul's message lay in Jesus Christ. He was determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. His only glory was in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Other cults might speak of dying and rising deities, but this was no mythical being like Attis and the others. The events had taken place but a few years previously, and this Christ was soon to come in judgment to put all God's enemies under his feet.

Much uncertainty must remain as to what Paul included in his missionary preaching and what belonged to the later teaching of his converts. But it may be helpful in concluding this chapter to attempt the reconstruction of a summary of what Paul might have said. Of such attempts, the one by Munzinger has contributed the most to the arrangement of the following. We might imagine Paul answering the invitation to speak at the synagogue in a town like Beroea or Corinth with words like these:

> I am Paul, of Tarsus, of the tribe of Benjamin. I advanced in our religion beyond many of my own age among my countrymen. As a Pharisee, I was exceedingly zealous for the traditions of our fathers. I was blameless according to the righteousness of the law. In my zeal, I persecuted the Nazarenes, who call themselves the church of God. At that time, I was a messenger of the Sanhedrin with a word of death to their communities. But now I am God's own messenger of life to all men.
>
> For I have come to see that all men are under the wrath of God. We have seen that in the lives of the Gentiles, who have been given up to all manner of uncleanness. But we who condemn them are ourselves guilty of some of the same practices. I can show you from our own scriptures that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God when each man will receive as he has done.
>
> But God has wanted reconciliation with his children. The night is now past and the day of the Messiah has come. The one whom the prophets foretold in scripture has appeared. His name is Jesus and he was born of the seed of David. Though he took the form of a servant, he was proved to be God's Son by the Spirit of holiness. But the Jews did not recognize him; they had him crucified. This cross is a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. But it is not true that it proves that Jesus was a sinner. He was without sin, and he died for our sins. As scripture predicted, he gave himself for us to rescue us from the present evil age.

The crucified one was buried; he was raised from the dead on the third day; he was exalted to the right hand of God and given the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord. Through belief in his name, we have received the promised Spirit.

You ask me how I know this? He appeared first to Cephas, then to his twelve disciples and later to more than five hundred brethren at once, of whom many are still alive. And I know that these are no fairy tales. God is my witness; I lie not; he appeared to me also. And so I bear witness in all places that Jesus is Lord, and he will soon come again in glory to judge.

Soon the trumpet will sound for the judgment. You should be children of light, heirs of salvation. Then joy and peace will rule in your hearts. And to you Gentiles, I appeal, turn from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, the Jesus whom he raised from the dead, who will deliver us from the wrath to come.

So I say, be reconciled to God. Now is the acceptable time. Believe on the gospel. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, for he who is with Christ is with God. If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, shall he not also with him freely give us all things?

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Through him that loved us we can be more than conquerors in every experience of life. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

BIBLE READINGS

1. The Itinerary: Acts 16:1-12; 17:1-15; 18:1-4.
2. Paul's Missionary Methods: I Thess. 2:1-12; II Thess. 3:7-9; I Cor. 1:25-31; 2:1-5; 9:15-18; Gal. 4:12-16; Phil. 4:15-18.
3. Luke's Picture of the Mission: Acts 16:13-40; 18:5-17.
4. The Message According to Acts: Acts 13:16-43; 14:15-18; 17:22-33.
5. Paul's Missionary Message: I Thess. 1:9-10; I Cor. 15:3-10; Rom. 1:18–2:16; 5:6-11; 8:1-2, 31-39.

CHAPTER XVIII

PROBLEMS OF GENTILE CHURCHES

The letters of Paul provide an open window through which we may look into the life of the first European churches. They are not to be read as essays in theology, but as the authoritative counsel of the missionary pastor who was temporarily separated from his new converts. Not that Paul was simply offering advice; as the apostle who had laid the foundation of the Temple of God he felt a responsibility for the completion of the edifice. Though freedom was a cornerstone of his faith, Paul confidently expected his own orders to be obeyed. He was writing to many who were babes in Christ and who had not come to full-grown manhood.

We have seen in the previous chapter how inadequate a picture of the inner life of the churches was painted by Luke. Paul amply makes up for that through these personal, intimate letters which were later preserved in the official canon of church writings. They are the earliest Christian documents which have come down to us and are contemporary with the beginnings of the church in Europe. Two letters were sent back to Thessalonica from Corinth, and Paul wrote a long letter to Corinth from Ephesus about two years after leaving the city. Our First Corinthians, however, was not his first letter to that church, for it refers to an earlier one which had been misunderstood. From these three letters we shall attempt to survey some of the problems faced in Paul's gentile churches.

1. The Problem of the Parousia

A central tenet of Christian faith was that Jesus would soon return in judgment to inaugurate the new age. Gentiles had much less preparation for this expectation than Jews with their messianic hope. It is little wonder that belief in the imminence of the judgment raised problems. Apparently even within the first few months some members of the church at Thessalonica had died. Would they share in the reign of Christ when he returned in glory? Paul assured the community that these who had died would not lose out on any Christian privileges. They would rise from the dead first and be taken to meet the Lord along with those who would be alive at his coming. Among these, the apostle confidently included himself. All those who had become part of the body of Christ would share in resurrection at his appearing.

But for Greeks, the whole idea of a resurrection presented difficulties. The conceptions of salvation which they had inherited called for release from the body, not its resuscitation. They had thought in terms of the immortality of the soul rather than a resurrection. Paul could not agree with them, for the resurrection was the cornerstone of his faith. The resurrection of Christ had in principle inaugurated the new age; if that event were not true, men were still in their sins. In his eyes, the freeing of the soul from the body was not a condition of salvation but a state of nakedness. A life after death that did not involve bodily existence seemed to him unreal.

Yet Paul did make a large and important concession. The body is not to be identified with the present physical body. Since there are many kinds of bodies among the creatures on earth and the different celestial beings, it naturally follows that the resurrection body is different from the body which is laid away. In fact, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Our present body of dust is like that of the first Adam; our new body will bear the image of the man from heaven. It will be a spiritual body, a body of splendor. In other words, Paul insisted that by the resurrection he did not refer to a resuscitation of the corpse, but a new being appropriate to the new conditions of life.

Neither for Paul nor for his converts was this hope a mere theory. It was a conviction that shaped their action and thought. Paul himself thought that marriage was unwise "in view of the impending distress." Those who were married were anxious about worldly affairs; they would give attention how to please each other rather than the Lord. Since the form of this world was passing and the time was growing short, outward matters should not concern them. But some at Thessalonica had carried this detachment from the world too far. They were living in idleness as they waited for the coming of the Lord. Toward such an attitude Paul was most peremptory. If anyone would not work he should not eat. He himself had set them an example of hard work at his trade, and these also should work for a living. Though the coming of the Lord was imminent, it would not be that soon, for certain events must transpire first.

2. Divisions at Corinth

In the church at Corinth ugly divisions had already arisen. They were not primarily over theological issues but over personalities. Many were still loyal to Paul, but other teachers had come since his departure and had built up strong followings. Acts tells us that Apollos, an Alexandrian, had been set right in his faith by Paul's co-workers and had gone to Achaia with letters of introduction. His eloquence had led many to say, "I belong to Apollos." Others said, "I belong to Cephas." (I Cor. 1:12.) While it is nowhere definitely said that this pillar apostle had visited Corinth, that is the most probable explanation for the origin of the party. It is clear that Paul strongly distrusted one of the other teachers and his following. They were building on the foundation which he had laid with materials that could not last. They were destroying the Temple of God. Clearly that was not Apollos, for whenever Paul wanted to illustrate the correct relationship between teachers he chose Apollos.

Was there then a fourth party? Who was saying, "I belong to Christ?" That might have been the slogan of those who, in their opposition to all party spirit, actually comprised a fourth group. Other interpreters see evidence here of a left-wing spiritist party who, in their dependence on their own revelations from Christ, disdained all human teachers. Since, however, the phrase does not reappear again in I Corinthians 3:22 it is more likely that there were only three real parties. Then it was in the group that rallied around Cephas that the chief cause of trouble lay. But Paul's argument deals more with the sin of party spirit than with the particular tenets of any party.

In the first place, the party strife was based on an overevaluation of men. None of these teachers had been crucified for them. It was in the name of Christ that believers had been baptized. Hence, no one should give his allegiance to a human teacher, but to the Christ who had died for them all.

In the second place, one of the parties at least laid too much stress on human wisdom. (Was it the Apollos party?) The word of the cross, however, was not a human philosophy but the "foolishness of God." It did not bring men a new wisdom but a new power. A glance at the complexion of their own membership should make that clear. It was not through "wisdom" that men knew God. Paul had not come into their midst with plausible words of wisdom, but in the power of the Spirit.

Yet he did grant that there was a secret wisdom which belonged to the gospel. In describing it Paul drew on some of the vocabulary of the Mysteries. But this "wisdom" was imparted through the Spirit which Christ bestows upon those who believe in him. Those who do not possess the Spirit cannot have this wisdom. Here Paul turned on his readers with a clever ethical application. As long as they engage in this party strife they show that they are men of flesh and do not possess the Spirit through which alone true Wisdom comes.

Finally, this party spirit made their teachers appear as competitors rather than as co-workers. In refutation, Paul drew in turn upon illustrations from agriculture and architecture. The workers in the same field are not competing but co-operating. All who labor in the building of a house are working to the same end. Hence the Corinthians did not need to choose among their teachers, for "all things are yours." They did not belong to men but to Christ, as Christ belongs to God.

But Paul did not end his discussion on the level of logic. Where personalities are so directly concerned, decisions are usually governed by the emotions. He sought to point beyond human judgments and pride to the judgments of the Lord. In moving words Paul pictured his own sufferings for them. Though they might have many guides, they did not have many fathers, and he had been their father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. As such, he would not hesitate to apply the rod when he came to put things in order.

3. Moral Delinquencies

It is not surprising that Paul had difficulties with these converts.

They included some who had been guilty of the grossest sins. The two spheres of conduct which are most difficult to bring under the control of Christian ideals are the fields of sex and of property. In writing to the Thessalonians Paul said that the will of God was their "sanctification." He was not referring to an advanced stage of Christian experience, but to abstaining from lust and sexual immorality, and from defrauding in business.

At Corinth Paul was compelled to criticize Christians engaging in lawsuits. Apparently it involved business disputes, for Paul wrote that it was not simply a question of being willing to be defrauded. They themselves were defrauding even their own brethren. In calling for the settlement of such disputes within the community Paul was doubtless influenced by the large autonomy which Jewish communities possessed in the application of their Torah. But he was also looking ahead to the time when believers would sit with Christ on thrones of judgment. If they could not settle these petty disputes among themselves, how did they expect to judge angels?

It was in the field of sexual irregularities that the most serious problems lay. Apparently there was a small rigid group who rejected marriage for a spiritual relationship between a young woman and a young man. Paul insisted that these should feel free to marry if the strain on continence was too great. Others were carrying Paul's doctrine of freedom from the Torah to the extreme of liberty from all restraints. "All things are lawful," was their slogan. Food does not contaminate the soul, for it affects only the body that perishes. Likewise, sexual intercourse is a physical act which is a matter of indifference to the soul. But that was a position which Paul vehemently repudiated. In their baptism, believers had become one with the body of Christ. To take the members of Christ and join them to a prostitute was impossible. It meant nothing less than separation from Christ. To Paul the body was not something lowly and inconsequential. It was the Temple of the Holy Spirit; God was to be glorified through our bodies.

The condoning of loose standards of sexual conduct had come to a head in the case of a prominent member who was living with his stepmother. This was incest, against which Paul's Jewish soul revolted. The toleration of even a little of such conduct would act as leaven fermenting the whole. Of course they could not avoid association with immoral people in the society about them, but in the community they should permit no such wickedness. Paul called for them to assemble as a church to condemn this man. His own spirit would be present and in his high apostolic consciousness he did not question what the verdict must be. They were to hand him over to Satan, the minister of death. Just how this was expected to take place is not said, but it shows the stern intolerance of Paul toward anything that might savor of libertine standards.

4. Relation to the Heathen Environment

There were many complications in the attempt of the early Christians to separate themselves from sinful society. One of the knotty problems concerned food offered to idols. There was a party in the church at Corinth which held that the enlightened Christian had no reason to avoid it. Since an idol had no real existence and there was no God but one, sacrificial meat was no different from any other. But there were other weaker Christians whose new intellectual convictions had not yet come to control their emotional reactions. They had been so accustomed to idols that they could not eat food that had been offered to them with a clear conscience. This was one of the problems about which the Corinthians had written asking for advice.

Paul agreed with the intellectual convictions of those who prided themselves on their "knowledge." But his chief criticism went out to them because of their lack of love. If the exercise of liberty caused others to fall, that was a sin against their brethren and against Christ himself. For this weak member of the church was a "brother for whom Christ died." It is better to sacrifice any right than to cause a brother to fall. Even with regard to food Paul would not agree that "all things are lawful." Yet he does not really answer the protest that there are demands of inner sincerity as well as of love. If a man is thankful to God, how can he be held responsible for another man's narrow prejudices?

But Paul also gave expression in this letter to a more strict attitude. Even the strong must take care that they themselves do not fall. They must exercise as great personal discipline as the athletes who compete in the games. It was possible for him to preach to others and yet be disqualified. Paul believed that the many so-called gods and lords did have some kind of existence; they were demons. When believers bought meat in the market place they need ask no questions. They might, if they were so inclined, accept dinner invitations from heathen friends. In that case, they should not bother to inquire about the food. But there was one thing that they must not dare to do: they must not participate in idol feasts in heathen temples. We have noted in the discussion of sexual conduct how realistically Paul conceived the believer's union with Christ. To participate in an idol feast meant to become a partner with demons. On the other hand, at the Lord's Table they enjoyed participation in the body of Christ. But the two things were mutually exclusive, "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons."

We can imagine that there were Corinthians who felt that Paul failed to draw the full implications of Christian freedom. But the apostle had good reason to fear the enticements of the paganism about them. The service of Christ demanded the repudiation of all idolatry, and Paul knew the subtle allurements of old associations. Although he believed that Christ had triumphed over the angelic rulers of this world, still demons were a real obstacle to be met. Hence, the sensible man would shun any contact with the worship of idols.

5. The Regulation of Worship

Not only were the Corinthians enjoined from participating in heathen worship. They were to set their own Christian worship in better order. The emancipation movement seems to have affected especially the women. To Paul it seemed scandalous that women should cut their hair or attend worship without a veil on their heads. As we read his appeal to the order of nature to support "taboos," we see one of the best illustrations of the constant temptation of good people to identify the customs with which they are familiar with the eternal will of God. Paul was anything but a feminist. He did not think that women should even speak in church. Let them ask their husbands if they have a question! But what if they had taken Paul's other advice and refrained from marriage? Possibly he knew that they would not do so.

Another difficulty at Corinth lay with the superspiritual who insisted upon exercising their talent in "speaking in tongues." Apparently there was no such problem at Thessalonica, for Paul wrote to them, "Do not quench the Spirit." It is clear from his description that this was ecstatic but unintelligible speech. It was highly valued because it could be considered as the language of angels. Some looked upon this as the highest gift of the Spirit of God. Paul could not agree. His judgment was not based on envy, for he boasted that he could excel them all in the gift. But that kind of ecstasy belonged in the private worship of a man and his God. If sounds are unintelligible to others, how are they benefited in public worship? Unbelievers receive a bad impression from this exhibition, and the learners who had not received the Spirit did not know when to say "Amen." He himself would rather speak five words of real instruction than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Paul argued that since *all* gifts came from one and the same Spirit, they all had the same divine quality. Just as the body needed many different parts, so the church, the body of Christ, needed many kinds of gifts. If a man had nothing but hands, and no feet or eyes, the body would be sadly handicapped. If the church had only one of the gifts of the Spirit, it too would be crippled. And the figure of the body suggested that the less showy gifts should be treated with even greater honor.

Far more important than the gift of speaking in tongues was the gift of prophecy. This did not mean primarily the foretelling of future events. Prophecy spoke to men "for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation." Prophets were to speak as they were moved by the Spirit, but the truth of their message was to be weighed by the hearers. Paul gives us a vivid picture of "the service of the word," which was a far departure from the staid and dignified synagogue ritual. Any believer might offer a hymn, or a revelation, or a tongue. But Paul was insisting upon greater order. No one was to speak in a tongue unless someone was present who could interpret this into rational speech. If a revelation came to another prophet, the one speaking was to sit down. God was not a God of confusion but of peace. Let no one say that he could not control his inspiration, for the Spirit of God cannot truly be the author of confusion.

The celebration of the community meal also contained abuses. Cliques and divisions extended even here. Some went ahead and gorged themselves, even drinking to excess, while the latecomers —doubtless poorer people—went hungry. This was a sin against the brotherhood and against the body of Christ which they were profaning. For, as Paul pointed out in his discussion of idol meat, "The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" He found a judgment on their sin in the bodily ailments which some had suffered. Sacraments could not save those who sinned any more than the wilderness generation were saved by the supernatural food and drink which God had given them.

Paul evidently felt that this spirit of revelry arose because they had not fully realized the meaning of this meal. "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." It may be that the Cephas party held to the Jerusalem type of celebration, where it was a joyful meal in anticipation of the banquet of the kingdom of God. For Paul, the Lord's Supper was a memorial of the Last Supper when Jesus had spoken those memorable words over the bread and the cup. They were to partake of the bread and the cup in remembrance of the new covenant in his blood.

6. The Christian Ideal

But Paul was endeavoring to do more in his letters than merely to correct abuses. He was seeking to develop and expand the Christian teaching which he had given his converts in person. The goal was not a life of mere abstention from sinful acts. It was a positive realization of the Christian virtues of *faithfulness, forbearance, and love*. These were not words to be praised, but ideals to be lived out amid even the most trying experiences of life.

We have already noted that Paul felt that celibacy was to be preferred to marriage. Nevertheless, he gave some wise counsel in response to their questions. It illustrates the high place which he gave to the tradition of the words of Jesus. The Master's rejection of divorce was made basic. At the same time, Paul clearly distinguishes between his own best judgment and the words of the Lord. Naturally, there was no word from Jesus about mixed marriages. Paul's advice was that the believer should never seek separation but should not refuse it if the heathen partner insisted. After all, marriage should be a relation where peace reigns, and there is no guarantee of winning the other partner to your faith.

It is not clear whether Paul would permit remarriage under these circumstances, but in no case would he recommend it. Yet, despite his own ascetic inclinations, Paul insisted upon faithful loyalty in every aspect of marriage.

Forbearance was developed in connection with the discussion of food offered to idols. When he called for the strong to give up their rights, he went on with a digression on the apostolic rights which he had denied himself in his missionary work. Naturally he did not elaborate on his right to be accompanied by a Christian wife. But he did enter upon a full defense of the right of an apostle to be supported by the churches. Secular experience, Temple practice, Old Testament scripture, and the words of Jesus all authorized the practice. But Paul had made no use of this right, for his preaching ministry was an inner necessity laid upon him by the Lord. His only reward lay in making the gospel free of charge. The Corinthians, too, must learn not to "stand on their rights" but to serve the common good.

The climax of Christian living lay in *love*. Paul interrupted his discussion of the overevaluation of the gift of tongues with a psalm of praise to this, the highest gift of the Spirit. So perfect is the composition that one wonders if Paul had not composed it in a more leisurely situation than that of dictating a letter. But on closer examination it is seen that almost every sentence was indirectly explained by the particular situation at Corinth. Some have asked about what relationship of love Paul was speaking. Was it God's love for men, man's love for God, or brotherly love toward one another? The answer is that it was the *agape* which was so characteristic of early Christianity. In Christ God had expressed his undeserved, self-giving love for sinful men. Men could never return that kind of love toward God, for he is the perfect, adorable object. Our response to God's love must be in showing the same *agape* to our fellow men.

The chapter falls into three distinct parts: first of all, the *supremacy* of love over all other gifts of the Spirit. Speaking in tongues, prophetic powers, "knowledge," faith, charity, even martyrdom—without love all are as nothing. The second part gives an eloquent analysis of the *nature* of this "bond of perfection." Love mut be patient, kind, humble, courteous, unselfish, good-tempered, and sincere. Finally, love alone is *permanent*. Prophecy will be superseded by event, knowledge will pass away, but love abides forever. Here Paul quotes a famous early Christian triad, "Faith, hope, and love last on." But that was not strictly true. Faith and hope would be replaced by knowledge and realization. The greatest of these was love, for love was the eternal purpose of God which had been revealed in Christ.

BIBLE READINGS

1. The Problem of the Parousia: I Thess. 4:13–5:11; II Thess. 2:1-12; 3:10-12; I Cor. 7:25-35; 15:12-19, 29-58.
2. Divisions at Corinth: I Cor. 1:10–4:21.
3. Moral Delinquencies: I Thess. 4:1-8; I Cor. 5:1–6:20.
4. Relation to the Heathen Environment: I Cor. 8:1-13; 10:1–11:1.
5. The Regulation of Worship: I Cor. 11:2-34; 12:1-27; 14:1-40.
6. The Christian Ideal: I Cor. 7:1-24; 9:1-27; 13.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FIGHT WITH LEGALISM

MANY problems in the early Christian churches arose from the pagan background of the majority of the converts. But other difficulties were due to the inevitable break which came with the orthodox Judaism. This fight over the legalistic interpretation of religion came to a head during Paul's long stay at Ephesus, which was the center for the evangelization of the province of Asia.

Ephesus was an important commercial center three miles from the sea located on the Cayster River. The artificial harbor was already beginning to silt up; it may be that on his final trip to Jerusalem Paul's ship passed Ephesus by for Miletus because entrance was sometimes difficult. The main street of the city led from the harbor to the theater, where Paul's friends faced a riot. A little to the north one can still make out the stadium, where men fought with beasts for the entertainment of the crowd. Far outside the city to the north stood the great Temple of Artemis, containing the statue which had reputedly fallen from heaven. The older settlement had stood here; with the decay of the commercial city, population was to continue in that vicinity rather than in the malarial marshes by the sea. Pergamum was the political capital of the province, but the commercial importance of Ephesus at this time made it the leading city.

According to the narrative in Acts it was not Paul who began that work. His friends, Prisca and Aquila, were left at Ephesus while he himself made a trip to Palestine. No reason is given for this long journey and we receive no information about it except the bare itinerary. The modern historian cannot help but suspect that it may be another of Luke's doublets, arising from the use of parallel sources. Once more Paul is brought through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, establishing all the disciples. He may then have come down the Lycus valley through Colossae and Laodicea, or a more northerly route may be indicated by the phrase, "upper country" (19:1).

1. Beginnings in Asia

The account of the mission in Ephesus is both fragmentary and obscure. It sounds amazing that Paul could at this time work three months in the synagogue. When driven out, he used the school of Tyrannus from eleven until four, the hours when its owner was not needing the building. During the space of two years the influence of the mission extended over the whole province. We learn from Colossians that churches had developed in that city and at Laodicea, though Paul himself had not preached there. Doubtless the beginnings of the churches to which John sent his Revelation—especially Smyrna, Pergamum, and Sardis—lay during Paul's missionary work. We have already noted the miracles ascribed to Paul and the conflicts with sorcery and magic. But what is most puzzling is Luke's story about Apollos and the twelve "disciples" who knew only the baptism of John. What was the nature of the faith of these before Paul and his friends removed their misconceptions?

It is said of Apollos that he spoke accurately the things concerning Jesus, but knew only the baptism of John. The others had been baptized into John's baptism and had not even heard that the Holy Spirit was given. Apollos was clearly a Christian of a sort before coming to Ephesus, and the others are called "disciples"; this word is nowhere else used of other than Christians. While the exact nature of their faith must remain obscure, this is a reminder that in A.D. 52 beliefs and practices were far from uniform.

For the rest of Paul's stay in Ephesus Luke had nothing to report except a stirring picture of a riot which took place shortly before his departure. Demetrius, a silversmith, feared that his business in making shrines would be hurt by this new monotheistic faith. He aroused the mob to shout, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians." Two Macedonian friends, Gaius and Aristarchus, were dragged into the theater and must have had some very anxious moments; but Paul was persuaded by some of his friends among the Asiarchs to stay in hiding. The townclerk quieted the mob and after the uproar ceased Paul left for Macedonia.

But it is clear from Paul's letters that this is no adequate picture of the troubles that he faced at Ephesus. He wrote to Corinth, "A wide door for effective work has opened to me, but there are many adversaries. . . . . What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus.' Again, in the second letter, he wrote, "I do not want you to be ignorant of the distress I experienced in Asia for I despaired even of my life. Where were all of those other imprisonments to which he referred shortly after, particularly when Andronicus and Junias were fellow prisoners? Modern scholars are increasingly convinced that we must allow for at least one imprisonment in Ephesus. It was Jews from Asia who led the attack on Paul later at Jerusalem. That was but a continuation of their opposition at Ephesus.

It is altogether possible that one or more of the "imprisonment letters" was written from Ephesus. While strong cases can be made out for such an origin of Philippians, and Colossians and Philemon, I still think that it is more likely that they were written during the Roman imprisonment, and we shall take them up at that time. It is the letters which deal with the flare-up of the Judaistic controversy outside Palestine (in distinction from the original struggle in Palestine) which belong to this period and to the immediately succeeding months (*ca.* A.D. 54-55).

2. The Galatian Crisis

It was probably while he was at Ephesus that the churches in Galatia came to a severe crisis because of the legalistic demands made on Paul's gentile converts. Who were those troubling them and perverting the gospel? It has been suggested that they were the local Jews. Doubtless these lent support to the demand for full obedience to the Torah. But Paul imputes to them the motive of avoiding persecution for the cross of Christ. That could hardly apply to Jews; therefore we must conclude that these were Jewish Christians from outside, probably from Palestine. The Judaizers who had failed to carry the day in Jerusalem some years before were now seeking to undermine Paul's gentile mission. Apparently they were not yet demanding observance of the whole law but only the acceptance of circumcision and observance of the Jewish ritual calendar.

Paul lashes out in this letter so fiercely because the threatened defection had arisen so quickly and his own authority as apostle was at stake. Since it was impossible for him to go to them, he wrote at white heat. If they accepted circumcision they must go the whole way. It was either Christ or Torah—they could not be combined. In his vehemence he even says that if these teachers think that there is any value in fleshly operations, they should go on to mutilate themselves like the priests of Cybele. His glory was not in his circumcision, but in the marks of the Lord Jesus which he bore in his body. The bulk of the letter, however, is a reasoned attack on the position of the Judaizers. If his use of scripture seems to us inconclusive, we must remember the *ad hominem* purpose of the argument. It was not written for us, but to meet teachers who themselves specialized in the proof-text use of scripture.

Paul began by referring back to the history of the controversy. His own law-free gospel was not dependent on the Palestinian authorities but had been a revelation to himself. Yet the pillars at Jerusalem had approved it. After defining the issue as between acquittal through the works of the law or through faith in Christ, Paul entered upon his argument. The essence of Christian life was life in the Spirit; but the Spirit had not come through circumcision but through faith. Abraham provided the crucial case in history, for he was the one to whom the covenant of circumcision had been given. But scripture said that Abraham had been approved by God for his faith long before he received circumcision.

Approval from God, or justification, did not come through the law. That only brought a curse upon men, for no one was able to obey it completely. Christ had redeemed men from this curse when by hanging on a tree a curse of the law undeservedly fell on him. Thus the law had not altered the fundamental will of God as expressed in his promise to Abraham any more than a legal testament could be altered. This law had been added through an intermediary for the sake of transgressions, for a temporary period. This had been a time of restraint and slavery. But now that Christ had come and had redeemed men from the law, they were no longer in slavery but had received the full adoption as sons.

Paul closed the discussion with an *analogy,* an *appeal,* and an *allegory.* Just as an heir does not come into his full inheritance until the day set by the father, so the freedom of the sons of God had not come until the full time decreed by him had elapsed. In his appeal, Paul reminded the Galatians of their former affection for him; now he was once more going through the pains of childbirth for them. The allegory developed the relative positions of the sons of Sarah, the free woman, and of Hagar, the slave. Those who demanded circumcision were, like Ishmael, sons of the slave woman. Only the law-free Christians were children of promise like Isaac. In this connection Paul found a most convenient text: "Cast out the slave and her son." The Galatians were to do the same with the teachers who also were persecuting those born of the Spirit.

We have no means of knowing whether Paul's letter was successful in meeting the crisis. But even though the Galatians may not have been saved for Christian liberty, this letter has been through the ages a priceless witness to that heritage of the gospel. In the ethical teaching which followed the argument, Paul made clear that this liberty was not license to follow the passions of the flesh without restraint. It was freedom to be led by the promptings of the divine Spirit. This bore the fruit of a genuine goodness which no law could compel. Men will reap the harvest which they have sown. The gospel does not bring bondage to external demands, but a grateful response which the indwelling Spirit calls forth to the redemption in Christ.

3. Opposition at Corinth

Meanwhile, conditions at Corinth had gone from bad to worse. When Paul wrote First Corinthians about Passover time (*ca.* 54) he expected to stay in Ephesus only until Pentecost. Then he would pass through Macedonia on his way to Corinth where he would spend the winter. But conditions became so critical that he had to cross over directly at once. Timothy had not been able to set things right. When Paul himself came, he suffered some personal wrong at the hands of a rebellious member of the group. He returned to Ephesus and wrote the church a hot letter "out of much affliction and anguish of heart, and with many tears." He did not regret its tone because it brought them to repentance, and led them to discipline severely the one who had wronged Paul. Either this "intervening letter" has been lost (it is easy to see why the church would not publish such a document) or parts of it are preserved in Second Corinthians. At least chapters 10-13 furnish much material for us to reconstruct the situation.

The trouble did not lie in a continuation of the party strife attacked in First Corinthians nor in the perils of antinomianism which arose from the libertine group. Leaders had come in from the outside, bearing letters of recommendation; these men were corrupting the word of God. They were not the Jerusalem apostles themselves, but people whom Paul characterized as "false apostles" and "ministers of Satan." Apparently they had boasted of their Jewish prerogatives; but Paul showed that he too could do a little boasting if that was the order of the day. There is no evidence that as yet these "superlative apostles" had demanded circumcision, but Paul was drawn to make a contrast between the two covenants. One was engraved on stone, the other written on human hearts. One was of the letter, the other of the Spirit. One led to death, the other to life. For Paul, it was "either-or." The gospel was not unitable with any legalism.

This second letter had been dispatched through Titus, Paul's most trusted coworker. Meanwhile, he took his departure from Ephesus, taking the land route which he had originally planned rather than across by sea to Corinth, since no favorable word had come. But he had no heart for any missionary work until his anxiety about the Corinthians was relieved. He left Troas and went on to Macedonia, "afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within." Here Titus met him with the good news of their mourning because of their treatment of Paul, and their new zeal for him. In joy at the reconciliation Paul wrote our Second Corinthians, at least chapters 1-8.

This is the most personal of Paul's letters to his churches. It is not easy to read, for of course the apostle did not stop to explain things for us which were perfectly well known by those to whom it was addressed. There were still misunderstandings to clear up. Some of the Corinthians thought he was fickle in changing his travel plans. Paul knew that there was still danger and appealed for them to open their hearts to him as he had opened his heart to them. Clearly there was a minority not yet won back, though the majority was obedient to his wishes. The burning sarcasm of chapters 10-13 may be addressed to these recalcitrants. Though this section is widely ascribed to the "intervening letter" it does not appear to have been written "out of bitter tears" but in biting irony.

In the midst of his most personal paragraphs, Paul reverted continually to the great religious truths of the gospel. He cannot discuss charges against his own veracity without referring to the one in whom all of the promises of God find their "Yes." In the midst of an appeal for generous participation in the offering for the saints at Jerusalem, he writes, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich." The climax of his discussion of the reconciliation with the community is his moving statement of the reconciliation which God had effected with men through Christ. It was not through obedience to the law that the reconciliation of an estranged humanity was accomplished. In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself. He died for all, that those who live might live by his constraining love. Through him and him alone men receive the righteousness of God.

4. Paul's Law-free Gospel

Paul was now winding up his work in the East preparatory to moving on to a new field of missionary endeavor. He had preached the gospel as far as Illyricum. Since it was his practice not to build on another man's foundation, he had chosen Spain as the next sphere for work. This may indicate that there was no nearer region to which missionaries had not already (A.D. 55) gone. First he planned to take to Jerusalem the great offering which he had been gathering. Then he would start west, making a stop at Rome. He was spending the end of the winter at Corinth as the guest of Gaius when he decided to write a long letter to the church at Rome.

There are several clear objectives which called forth this most important of the literary efforts of Paul. Emerging as he was from the crisis of the legalistic controversy in Galatia, Corinth, and possibly other centers, the apostle was glad to seize this opportunity of making a full formulation of the distinction between the Christian faith and the claims of Torah. He restates many of the points made in earlier letters, but now in a more dispassionate way. He knew that many misconceptions about his position and work were being propagated by his enemies. The best way to refute them was to make a clear statement of what he did believe. Since he wanted to stop in Rome and make them some spiritual contribution, he was eager to build up confidence in himself. If chapter 16 was an original part of the letter, many of Paul's friends were already at the capital. Many modern students feel that it is unlikely that Paul could know so many people at a place where he had never been. They believe that this letter of introduction for Phoebe was sent rather to Ephesus. In any case, it is probably separate from the main epistle.

The argument of Romans is the most sustained piece of reasoning we have from the pen of Paul. After an elaborate salutation to his readers, the usual expression of thanksgiving, and words about his longing to see them, he accepts the obligation to set forth the gospel even to them. It is a gospel which all men need, for all are separated from God by sin. The Gentiles had had a chance to know the Creator from his works, but instead of that had worshiped the creations of their own hands. Therefore God had given them up to the punishment of their horrible vices. Those who condemned them in the pride of their own virtue could not escape God's righteous judgment, for they practiced the very same things.

The Jews were not saved by their law, for they themselves did not keep it. Circumcision was of no benefit unless one obeyed the law. The commandments of the law only provided an incitement to transgression. The law was powerless to achieve its righteous end because of the weakness of the flesh and the law in our members which stood in opposition. As a result, the good which man willed he was not able to accomplish. Sin in the flesh, a racial contamination from Adam, made it impossible for men to attain with their own efforts the righteousness demanded by God.

But God had provided deliverance from the body of that death. He had demonstrated his own saving righteousness by a great act of redemption which was in Christ Jesus. He himself had provided the expiation which men could not furnish. What the law could not do, God himself had done for men by sending his own Son to condemn sin in the flesh. The saving righteousness of God had been revealed in Christ. Here was the demonstration of his grace and the fulfillment of his promise.

Hence, men were saved not on the basis of what they had done but through faith—believing reception of what God had done for them in Christ. Since this righteousness of God is received by faith only, man can have no ground for boasting. Dependence upon the works of the law is a denial of the righteousness of God. It is dependence on man's own righteousness. That is not the way approved by God, for both the law and the prophets testify to dependence upon faith. Abraham and David both illustrate the principle of the gospel. The true descendants of Abraham are not his physical progeny, but all those who, like Abraham, believe in him who raises the dead. For as Habakkuk wrote, "He who is righteous by faith shall live."

The result of man's acquittal by faith is that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. If the sin of the first Adam brought sin and death to humanity, the free gift of grace has brought righteousness and eternal life through Christ, the second Adam. If God did so much for men while they were yet sinners, now that they have been reconciled to God, they are even more certain to be saved at the final judgment. What God has begun in his gracious will that preceded even their calling, he will carry through until they obtain their body of glory.

But it does not follow from the deliverance which God has provided that moral struggle is no longer necessary. The reception of grace does not mean permission to sin. Belief in Christ is followed by baptism. That means nothing less than dying with him and rising to walk in an entirely new life. The old self must be crucified. Sin must no longer reign in our mortal bodies, but we must be servants of righteousness. The death of the old man frees one from the legal obligations of the law as much as a wife is free to marry another when her husband dies. This new freedom is a freedom to live according to the Spirit. That is the very opposite of serving the flesh; it is the power of a triumphant moral life. In the midst of the most trying circumstances, God works for good with those who love him. And with Christ Jesus making intercession for them, no charge can stand against God's elect.

But Paul did not stop with the contrasting of the way of faith with that of legalism. His missionary experiences had forced upon him a heartbreaking problem, the unbelief of the Jews. Despite all of the privileges which had been theirs, they had not accepted God's salvation. At the time when Paul was writing, it had already become apparent that the mass of the Jews would not accept the gospel. Had God cast off his people? Through three chapters he wrestled with the problem as one who at heart had never ceased to be a Jew.

First he tried the answer of predestination. The unbelief of the Jews had come because of the inscrutable divine decree. The sovereign God could do what he would with his own creations. It was God's will to save only a remnant from them. Then he attempted the solution from free will. The gospel had been offered to the Jews, but in their mistaken zeal they had not submitted to the righteousness of God. Old Testament passages were at hand to support both positions. Then Paul comforted himself with the thought that at least a remnant had believed, and the unbelief of the Jews might provide the time necessary to carry the gospel to all of the Gentiles. Addressing the Gentiles at Rome, he reminded them that it was through no merit of their own that they had been saved. If God could graft them, as it were, into the tree of salvation, he could also bring back those branches which really belonged to the tree, Israel by race. So Paul looked forward hopefully to the salvation of all Israel before the end. Just how this was to be he does not say. He could only appeal to the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God.

No brief summary like this can begin to sound the depths of this remarkable exposition of Paul's faith. The great minds of the church have continually returned to it for inspiration and stimulus. But it must never be forgotten that this statement was by no means a presentation of the whole of Paul's faith. His purpose was to set forth *the relation of the gospel to Judaism.* When the center of attention moved away from the controversy over legalism it was inevitable that Christian faith should be expressed in different terms. In a later chapter we shall attempt, apart from this polemical situation, to see the fuller orbit of Paul's Christian faith. But as the Roman church laid down this roll, they must have waited eagerly for the appearance of the apostle. As fate would have it, several years were to intervene, and then he was to come as a prisoner appealing his case to Caesar.

BIBLE READINGS

1. Beginnings in Asia: Acts 18:18–19:20; I Cor. 16:5-12, 19-20; 15:32; II Cor. 1:8-11; Acts 19:21-41.
2. The Galatian Crisis: Gal. 1:1-10; 3:1–5:1; 5:7-12; 6:12-17.
3. Opposition at Corinth: II Cor. 2:1-4, 17; 3:1-18; 5:11–6:1; 7:2-16, 2:12-13; 10:12-18; 11:13-15, 22-23.
4. Paul's Law-free Gospel: Rom. 1:1–2:29; 3:21–5:11; 5:18–6:11; 7:1-6; 8:1-11; 9-11.

CHAPTER XX

THE CLOSE OF THE APOSTOLIC AGE

PAUL wrote to the Galatians that on his second trip to Jerusalem the "pillars" had exacted one promise, "We should remember the poor." Paul affirmed that he was zealous to do that very thing. His final trip to Jerusalem was the fulfillment of the pledge. It was then that he carried up the great contribution which he had gathered from his churches in Achaia, Macedonia, Asia, and Galatia.

1. The Contribution for the Saints

The importance of this enterprise is obscured for the casual reader of the New Testament, for Luke only referred to it parenthetically in one sentence of a speech ascribed to Paul. But it is clear from Paul's letters that it was a major concern over a period of many months. The fullest discussion is to be found in II Corinthians 8-9, where Paul labors under the difficulty of promoting a contribution from those who have but recently been estranged from him. From those chapters, however, we can see how thoroughly it was organized and how well Paul understood the fundamental principles in financing a great benevolence.

Such a large sum could not be handled as a personal matter without Paul becoming subject to criticism. Therefore a delegate had been appointed by the churches to travel with him in the gracious work, and Paul likewise had his own representative. For the ticklish task at Corinth, Titus was also pressed into service. The brethren were to lay aside for this purpose on the first day of each week, so that there would be no need for money raising when Paul arrived. Each region participating was to send a delegate to accompany Paul on the trip to Jerusalem. That explains the long list of persons named in Acts 20:4 who gathered finally at Troas.

In his appeal Paul did not assert any obligation to tithe. Christ was the end of all such legalism. But sharers in the grace of Christ should share also in this grace of benevolence. By their contribution they could express thanks for God's inexpressible gift. Not that Paul omitted entirely all lower motives. He did not neglect to stress emulation as he told the Corinthians how sacrificially the Macedonians had responded. He referred to the law of the harvest; if they desired to reap bountifully they must also sow bountifully. But it is only the cheerful giver whom God loves.

Why did Paul devote so much time and attention to the raising of this contribution? The answer is, it was his final attempt to bind together his gentile churches and the mother church at Jerusalem. The legalistic controversy, even within his churches, had made clear the tensions that strained this unity. But Paul could never willingly accept any separation within the church. As there was but one Lord there could be but one church. This contribution for the "poor among the saints at Jerusalem" was his attempt to demonstrate the unity of the faith. The dependence of the Gentiles on the mother church for their spiritual blessings could thus be shown. This does not mean that there was no aspect of relief involved in the project. One of the motivations which Paul named was that of "equality." But the contribution was not sent simply because the saints at Jerusalem were poor. The Macedonian churches were themselves in extreme poverty. We must never forget that the "poor" was a religious term as well as economic. This contribution was for the "saints at Jerusalem," and recognized a real primacy of that church. It showed Paul's desire to weld together all of the scattered church of Christ.

Luke traced the itinerary to Jerusalem with minute detail, drawing once more upon the travel diary. He represented the purpose of the journey as that of celebrating Pentecost at Jerusalem. Yet at the end we never learn whether Paul reached his destination in time. At Miletus he was met by the elders from Ephesus, to whom a moving valedictory was spoken. Here and again at Tyre the note of sad and final farewell pervades the story. Some suppose that this was only because Paul was headed for distant Spain. Yet we must remember that Luke never even hints at any such ultimate destination. We cannot help but wonder if this was not his way of informing his readers of the martyrdom of Paul. Again at Caesarea warnings were issued by the prophet Agabus of the fate awaiting him. But Paul heroically announced his willingness to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul had known from the outset that he had embarked on a dangerous errand. He had asked for the prayers of the church at Rome that he might be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea and that his service for Jerusalem might be acceptable to the saints.

2. Developments in Palestine

During the intervening years, the situation in Palestine had grown markedly worse. The increasing disorder is clear from Luke's account. The Roman tribune imagined that Paul was the Egyptian who had led four thousand men of the "Assassins" out into the wilderness. A desperate band of Jews took an oath not to eat until they had killed Paul. These pictures can be duplicated from the story in Josephus. He tells us that after the death of Herod Agrippa in A.D. 44 Rome once more sent procurators to Judea. Three served in rapid succession before the coming of Felix. The account is filled with insurrections and riots, and then under Felix we read, "The affairs of the Jews grew worse continually, for the country was again filled with robbers."

As far as the Christian church is concerned, our information is meager. James and a body of elders were the ruling power. Nothing is said of the presence of any apostles in Jerusalem. The "thousands of those who believe" were all zealous for the law. Instead of there being any enthusiasm for the gentile mission, it awakened strong suspicion. These Christians had broken with neither the law nor the Temple. We are reminded of the stories of the birth of Jesus in Luke, where the devout are so strongly attached to the Temple. Paul was informed of the decree on food sacrificed to idols (as if he had never heard of it). Luke does not say whether the "saints at Jerusalem" were grateful for the generous sacrifice of the churches which Paul had founded. We are not even told whether the contribution was accepted. But James made it clear that Paul's presence was embarrassing to them unless he did something to reassure the Jews that he was not trying to tear down Judaism. Josephus wrote that when James was killed, a half-dozen years later, the action was disapproved by the best citizens. That verifies the impression from Acts that James was determined to protect his own good standing among the devout Jews.

Luke says that Paul acceded to the request, and associated himself with four men who had taken a vow. By paying the charges Paul was to show that he "walked orderly, keeping the law." This incident has seemed so incredible in the face of Galatians and Romans that not a few scholars have ascribed the story to Luke's harmonizing objective. But we must not forget the Zionist strain in Paul, the pull of the old associations, and his genuine desire to preserve the unity of the church. Whatever may be the truth concerning Luke's representation, Paul quite failed to prove to his countrymen that he was still a law-abiding Jew. They seized him in the Temple on the supposition that he had taken Trophimus, an Ephesian Gentile, inside the courts reserved for Jews only. He would have been mobbed without delay if the tribune had not arrived promptly from the Castle of Antonia with a band of soldiers.

3. The Trial of Paul

The next day, according to Luke, Paul was sent down to the Council for examination. It is another scene in which Paul appears at much less than his best. It provides the first illustration of Luke's claim that Paul was on trial for his belief in the resurrection. This could be true only in the sense that the *resurrection of Jesus* was central to his message. But it is very strange that a theological debate on the general idea of the resurrection should cause a near riot between the Sadducees and the Pharisees on the Council. This perplexing scene does not advance the solution of Paul's case. On the discovery of a plot against his life, he was spirited away to Caesarea by night. Here was the residence of the procurator and the natural place for the trial of a Roman citizen.

The Jews presented their case through a lawyer by the name of Tertullus. Three charges were brought against Paul. He was a mover of insurrections throughout the world; he was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes; and he had profaned the Temple. The reply which Luke ascribes to Paul is not very convincing on the first point. He said that it was only twelve days since he had come up to Jerusalem, and there had been no riot. But that ignored the many disturbances in the diaspora which had arisen because of the work of Paul. He continued with the claim that this "sect" of the Nazarenes held the true doctrine of the law and the prophets. Finally, he categorically denied that he had profaned the Temple. His closing words showed that it was Jews from Asia who were at the root of the trouble. If they returned home shortly after their visit to the festival we may have one reason why the case dragged on so long without result.

Felix deferred decision until he could see the tribune who had made the arrest. Luke also says that Paul was sent for many times because Felix hoped to receive money. Why this tentmaker, who had supported himself with his own hands, should be in position to offer a big bribe is not clear. Had the "saints in Jerusalem" refused the contribution? Likewise, where did Paul get his money to finance the appeal to Caesar? But Luke was not interested in satisfying our curiosity on such mundane points.

According to the most normal reading of the text, two years passed before Felix was succeeded by Festus. What was Paul doing during this imprisonment in Caesarea? How was the restless, impulsive missionary spending his time? It is inconceivable that they were days of idleness. Those who believe that Luke was the final author of the Lukan writings picture him collecting the material for his two volumes. Others assign some of the imprisonment letters of Paul to this period. But there is little positive evidence to support the conjecture. It may be that fragments from a note written in Caesarea are incorporated in our Second Timothy. There we read, "At my first defense no one took my part, but all forsook me; may it not be laid to their account." Whether or not that was written at this time, at least it serves as a reminder that Paul was apparently isolated in his imprisonment. There is no evidence that James raised a hand to help him. Philip was in Caesarea; we wonder if he visited Paul!

Soon after the coming of Festus, the case of Paul was brought to his attention. Since he was ignorant of the details, he proposed a hearing at Jerusalem; but Paul appealed instead to Caesar. While they were waiting for an opportunity to send him to Rome, Agrippa II and his sister Bernice arrived to pay their respects to the new procurator. As the ranking Jewish prince, he had the power to make the appointment of the high priest. Festus took advantage of this diplomatic visit to hold a hearing on Paul's case in order to make out the charges against him. Now came the fulfillment of the prediction in the gospel, "Before governors and kings will you stand for my sake" (Mark 13:9) . For this thrilling scene Luke provided one of the finest speeches in the Acts of the Apostles. It re-echoes the familiar motifs of the book, and ends with the strong affirmation of the innocence of Paul.

The voyage to Rome, undertaken late in the season against contrary winds, is told in great detail as it too was drawn from the travel diary. The cloudy fall and winter months were a difficult time to sail with the crude nautical instruments of antiquity. A terrible storm caught them off the island of Crete and drove their vessel west for fourteen days. They were shipwrecked on the island of Melita, where they had to stay for three months until navigation opened again. Then they sailed to Puteoli, just north of modern Naples. At the Market of Appius brethren met them and soon they reached Rome.

4. Paul at Rome

For the events at Rome, Acts is not of great assistance. We are told that Paul met with the Jewish leaders and that he spent a whole day demonstrating the gospel to them from the Old Testament. When most of them did not believe, fulfillment came to the hardening prophecy of Isaiah, and Paul turned to the Gentiles. But this is Luke's theme through the entire book and does not illuminate the particular situation in Rome. The book ends with the statement that Paul lived for two years in his own hired house unhindered in his missionary work.

If, as I believe, the imprisonment letters come from this time, their pages must be drawn upon for our chief information. Colossians and Philemon belong together. Timothy joins in the sending of the letters and Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, and Mark all send greetings in both. That made quite a misisonary company. The Colossian church had developed through the efforts of Epaphras, who was now with Paul as a "fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus." Through him Paul had learned of the dangerous speculative teaching which was arising, a crisis which we shall discuss in

Chapter XXIII. Paul wrote proclaiming the supremacy of Christ and the nature of the life in Christ. He asked for their prayers that a door might open for him to speak the mystery of Christ, for which he was in bonds.

Tychicus carried the letter and was accompanied by Onesimus, a former slave of Philemon, whom Paul was sending back to his master. The accompanying note to him asked that Onesimus should be received as if he were the apostle himself. It tactfully suggests that Paul had an important mission for the slave, but of course everything must be done with the owner's consent. Philemon is told that Paul hopes to come to him soon. We wonder if the project to go to Spain had been given up because of the long imprisonment and delay. Had Paul become prematurely aged by his hardships?

At the time of the writing of Philippians, Paul's situation was more critical. Timothy was still with him, but no other individual missionaries are named. Epaphroditus had brought a contribution from the beloved Macedonian community. They were concerned about their messenger, for they had heard that he was sick. But Paul assured them that he was well again and now returning to them. The community was suffering persecution, apparently from the Jews. There were also evidences of factious spirit which needed to be transformed into Christlike humility.

Even more interesting to us is the information regarding Paul's own condition. Imperial slaves were among the saints who sent greetings. The cause of his imprisonment was now known throughout the whole praetorian guard, and others had become more bold to preach the gospel. True, Paul suspected the motives of some; they desired to afflict him in his imprisonment, but still he could rejoice. Joy even in martyrdom is the keynote of the letter. As to the outcome of his own case, Paul was very uncertain. Personally he did not fear martyrdom, for that would only mean to depart and be with Christ. But he realized that for the church it was more important that he survive.

Was Paul released at the end of these two years? There is no conclusive evidence that he was. The supposed tradition that he went to Spain is probably only an early deduction from the reading of Romans. Of course if the Pastoral Epistles are accepted as from Paul one must conclude not only that he was released, but that he traveled over all the Aegean basin again and added Crete to the scene of his labors. But I think that it is certain that these documents come from a much later period. Their teaching will be described in the chapters dealing with the postapostolic period. It is entirely possible that Paul was released for a time. Though Luke was eager to pile up testimony to his innocence, he never makes clear what the exact legal situation was. It has been suggested that if guilt was not proved within two years, the prisoner automatically would be released. Others have suggested that Acts ends as it does because the trial was not yet over; it has even been held that the book was part of the brief for Paul's trial. But other clues indicate that Luke-Acts was written long after this time.

Our only certainty is that Paul was ultimately beheaded under Nero. That unanimous tradition cannot be set aside. Second Timothy may preserve some notes to Timothy from the closing days. His coworkers are scattered; "Only Luke is with me." No more appropriate words for his epitaph could be penned than these: "I am already being offered, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept faith."

5. Legends of the Other Apostles

Where were the other missionaries carrying on their work? Particularly, what had become of the twelve disciples? According to later ecclesiastical legend, they stayed in Jerusalem for twelve years and then went to their appointed mission fields. But there is no evidence of early information except in the case of Peter. That Thomas went to India, Andrew to Scythia, and Mark to Egypt has no early support. Peter drops out of Acts after chapter 15, yet we can follow his trail to many points. Paul had an altercation with him at Antioch, and that church later called him their first bishop. A Cephas party arose at Corinth. A later pseudonymous epistle could connect Peter in some way with five provinces of Asia Minor.

The most persistent Petrine tradition developed concerning the apostle's connection with Rome. Protestant prejudice has been unduly skeptical of this. Of course it is an anachronism to ascribe to Peter any such office as that of bishop, and it is quite impossible that he could have spent anything like twenty-five years at the capital city. But may he not have been there already when Paul wrote? Was that one reason for the long letter? In any case, Rome was the natural place to which Christian leadership should gravitate. The Fourth Gospel clearly refers to the martyrdom of Peter but does not tell where he was to follow his Lord in crucifixion and lay down his life for him. But First Clement probably points to martyrdom at Rome during the persecution under Nero.

Of only one of the apostles was there any tradition that he survived the apostolic age. That was John, the son of Zebedee. True, his name never appears in the New Testament after the apostolic conference. But later tradition (first found in Justin *ca.* 150) identified the prophet John who wrote the Apocalypse with the apostle by that name. Though the book makes no claim to be by a disciple of Jesus, and many find it difficult to believe that one who had known the master on earth could draw this picture of vengeance, yet the tradition must be given serious consideration. Later, the Fourth Gospel was also ascribed to the disciple John, and before the end of the second century we meet a developed tradition that he lived to a ripe old age at Ephesus. John 21 reflects the belief that this was the disciple who would live until the Lord should come.

There was also another tradition, ascribed to Papias (A.D. 140), that John was killed by the Jews. Mark records a striking corroboration of this in the promise of martyrdom to both James and John, "You shall indeed drink of the cup." Would he have written as he did if this event had not taken place? Modern scholarship is as yet far from agreement on the evaluation of the second-century traditions about John. We must entertain the possibility that, after the fall of Jerusalem, he was among the Palestinian Christians who went to Asia Minor, then becoming the strongest Christian region. Philip and his daughters are said to have settled at Hierapolis, and John may have made his home in Ephesus. But it is undeniable that the literature associated with that city during the next two generations is strangely silent about the fact.

6. THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

The further history of the Palestinian Christian church is largely hidden from view. James was stoned by order of the high priest during the disorders between the death of Festus and the coming of Albinus as procurator in A.D. 62. In the second half of the second century, Hegesippus recorded the legend that he had been a Nazarite, and was called the Just. He had prayed in the Temple so long that his knees became as hard as those of a camel. He was succeeded by a nephew by the name of Symeon, thus continuing the dynasty of Jesus.

The political situation in Palestine continued to grow worse. Social cleavage divided the overpopulated country. Zealot enthusiasts persisted in their agitation for freedom, while the "Assassins" filled the country with murder and robbery. The Roman governors were quite unable to cope with the situation and open rebellion broke out in A.D. 66. Eusebius of Caesarea wrote in his church history (*ca.* 326) that at the command of a revelation which came to them, the Christian community fled to Pella, a town in Perea under the rule of Agrippa II. It has frequently been conjectured that the "revelation" is contained in Mark 13, where the "little apocalypse" strangely combines a cosmic catastrophe with a historical crisis. Here we read, "Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains" (13:14). Pella is not on a mountain, but the Christians did withdraw and took no part in the bloody revolt.

Since as a young man of twenty-eight Josephus was entrusted with the defense of Galilee, he was well qualified to write a full account of this War of the Jews. After the extremists had thrown down the gauntlet, the responsible leadership at Jerusalem took command of the situation. They envisaged the opportunity to win freedom for the Jewish people. Vespasian was the general to whom Nero assigned the difficult task of putting down the revolt. He succeeded in quelling the opposition outside Jerusalem and was ready for the siege of the city when Nero was killed. During the civil wars that followed, Vespasian followed a policy of watchful waiting. Finally he entered the contest and came to the imperial power in A.D. 69. But the Jews did not take advantage of this respite to strengthen their position. Instead, they were waging fierce internecine strife among themselves. The extremists more and more came to power. When Titus finally laid siege in the spring of A.D. 70 they withstood him for five months. Finally, on September 8, the citadel fell, the city was burned, and the Temple sacrifices ceased forever.

Naturally, such a catastrophic event is reflected in the New Testament. Luke replaced Mark's vague picture of the "abomination of desolation standing where he ought not" with a description of Jerusalem encompassed with armies. Elsewhere he wrote vivid descriptions of the siege. Matthew included in his version of the parable of the wedding feast this clear addition, "The king was angry; and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city." The fall of Jerusalem is the natural end of the apostolic age, for it inevitably transformed the status of Christians in the empire. Until this time, they would appear as only a sect of the Jews. Now dispersion Jews were to send their Temple tax to the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome. Should Christians do so too and thus "buy protection"? It may be that the Temple tax story which stands only in Matthew reflects this new problem of the church.

The fall of Jerusalem meant the end of any primacy for the mother church. For the second-century church Fathers these "Ebionites" were no longer on the central line of development. As Christianity became more and more a gentile movement, those who clung to the Jewish tie were left behind. The future of Christianity lay with such a man as the author of the letter to the Hebrews; for him there could be no point in restoring the Temple sacrifices. For the author of the Fourth Gospel, "the Jews" are identified with the God-opposing world. The church which was to move slowly toward consolidation in the following generations was to be led by Greek-speaking communities in the wider Mediterranean world.

BIBLE AND SOURCE READINGS

1. The Contribution for the Saints: I Cor. 16:1-4; II Cor. 8-9; Rom. 15:25-27; Acts 20:1–21:16.
2. Developments in Palestine: Acts 21:18-25; Luke 2:21-38; Josephus, *Ant.* xx. 8.
3. The Trial of Paul: Acts 21:26–26:32; 27:1–28:16; II Tim. 4:13-18.
4. Paul at Rome: Acts 28:17-31; Col. 1:3-8; 4:7-18; Philem.; Phil. 1:12-26; 2:19-30; 4:21-22; II Tim. 4:6-12, 19-21.
5. Legends of the Other Apostles: John 21:18-23; I Pet. 1:1; I Clem. 5:4; Acts of Peter 35-38; Mark 10:38-40.
6. The Fall of Jerusalem: Luke 19:41-44; 21:20-24; Matt. 22:7; 23:35-36; John 11:48.

Part V

THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE CHURCH

CHAPTER XXI

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHURCH ORGANIZATION

THE half century which followed the age of the apostles was one of the most critical periods in the life of the Christian church. The original leaders had largely passed off the scene and most of their successors were men of smaller stature. The first enthusiasm had cooled and was often replaced by the conventionalism of second- and third-generation believers. The rapid spread of the faith over the Mediterranean world brought more and more diversification, and gravely imperiled unity. As the new movement came to a fuller self-consciousness, it had to work out its standards of belief and conduct, and make some adjustment to the surrounding pagan society.

1. EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH IN THE EMPIRE

For the period from 70 to 117 we have no narrative of the external events to guide us as during the apostolic age. But since most of the books of the New Testament were written during this time, it is as vital for "New Testament history" as the earlier period. Much of the literature was ultimately associated with some apostolic name. The reason for this was that in the second half of the second century "apostolic" became the key word in erecting a standard for Catholic Christianity. These ascriptions of authorship must be studied in detail in the standard Introductions to the New Testament. I do not believe that any of our New Testament books were written before A.D. 70 except the genuine letters of Paul and possibly the Gospel according to Mark. The reader is referred to the chronological tables for the approximate dates accepted for the others. The characteristics and interests of the authors will appear as we deal in the following chapters with the way in which they met the problems of the church during this time.

James is a tract on moral duties, possibly re-editing a Jewish "Testament of Jacob." The anonymous Epistle to the *Hebrews* is the earliest formal apologetic. Though many scholars still assign *Ephesians* to Paul, it is more likely that it is a later pseudonymous work. Some believe that it was written by the editor who collected the Pauline corpus of letters. *First Peter* is probably pseudonymous; possibly it incorporates an earlier baptismal sermon. *Second Peter* comes from a much later time, incorporating most of the little Epistle of *Jude.* The *Johannine epistles* were written by a prominent elder, who was certainly not the author of *Revelation,* and may be distinct from the author of the Fourth Gospel. In First and Second *Timothy* and *Titus* the authority of Paul is used to meet the problems arising early in the second century. In addition to the books of the New Testament, other Christian writings of the same period will be cited. Chief among these are *First Clement,* a letter from Rome to Corinth, the seven letters of *Ignatius,* bishop of Antioch, and the early Christian manual called the *Didache,* or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles. While this may have received its final literary form later, it certainly incorporates materials dating from this period.

Our period opens with the coming to power of the Flavian emperors. *Vespasian* (69-79) did not follow in the glitter and extravagance of the Julio-Claudian emperors, but inaugurated a happier period. It was marked by financial reorganization and such building enterprises as the Colosseum and the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus at Rome. There was added stability because he had two sons. *Titus* lived to reign only two years as emperor. This was marked by the destruction of Pompeii, which affords us today the best view of the Roman civilization of the first century. *Domitian* ruled from 81 to 96 and, according to our relatively meager sources of information, was ruined by power. In Chapter XXV we shall consider the evidence for the persecution of the Christians during his reign. His attack on high men at Rome during the last three years of his reign led to plots against him which brought *Nerva* to the throne for two years. With *Trajan* (98-117) there opened the period of the greatest glory for the

Roman Empire. He waged wars on the Danubian front and against Parthia, and continued great building enterprises. *Hadrian,* his successor, waged the second war against the Jews (132-35), but with his accession to power our period may be brought to a close.

During this half century, the church spread over most of the empire, though as yet the religion was largely confined to the cities. Asia Minor was the region most extensively evangelized. First Peter is addressed to all of the provinces north of the Taurus Mountains. Pliny wrote to Trajan that the movement had gone so far that the temples in the province of Bithynia had been almost deserted. We know of Christian churches in the following cities in Asia Minor: Ephesus, Colossae, Laodicea, Hierapolis, Smyrna, Pergamum, Sardis, Philadelphia, Thyatira, Troas, Tralles, and Magnesia. The two most important Christian centers were those at Antioch and Rome. Alexandria had not yet emerged into Christian history. For the western part of the empire and the countries to the east we possess little indication of the development of the church. But the movement had gone far since the early days at Jerusalem. The prophet John could picture those of every tribe, nation, tongue, and people gathered into the city of God, for the church of his time was world-wide in scope.

2. The Church as the People of God

We have already seen that the idea of the church as the people of God preceded the formation of the local congregations. For Paul, baptism united all believers into the body of Christ. The people of God formed one organic unity in him. Paul had used other figures as well to describe the church; it was the building erected on the one foundation of Jesus Christ; it was the pure bride set apart for him. The figure of the bride "adorned for her husband" reappears in the book of Revelation. It is also in the epistle which in many manuscripts is addressed to the Ephesians. This contains the most fully developed doctrine of the church.

This great document of post-Pauline mysticism celebrates the unity of the church. The struggle over gentile admission is a thing of the past. The mystery of the gospel is no longer "Christ in you, the hope of glory," but that Gentiles are fellow members of the body. Christ had broken down the middle wall of partition and brought peace between Jew and Gentile. The readers were to keep the unity of the Spirit in the one body, for they have one baptism, one faith, and one hope. The other figures of speech are also continued; but now the church is a building erected on the foundation of the apostles and prophets; Christ is called the cornerstone. In other words, the people of God are the true Temple which has been raised up. Likewise the church is the bride of Christ; wives are exhorted to give the same obedience to their husbands that the church must give to Christ. For Christ had loved the church and given himself for it that he might present it holy and without blemish.

Even books of the period which do not use the word *ekklesia* (church) have a developed concept of the unitary people of God. The author of First Peter wrote to "the elect" who were built up into a living spiritual temple. They had once been Gentiles who had not obtained mercy, but now they were the people of God, "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession."

The Gospel of John also does not use the term "church," but the book is one of the most churchly in the New Testament. If the Jews destroy his body and the Temple, Christ will raise up a new Temple which is his body. This Christ has sheep in various folds, but there is *one flock* and one shepherd. Instead of being members of one body, individuals are branches of the true vine. There can be no life if they are severed from the vine. In the upper room Christ prays that those who are to believe on him through the word of the disciples may all be one, "Even as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be in us." But this clearly lays the emphasis on unity in spirit rather than any formal organization.

Entrance to the church was through the rite of baptism. The earliest description of the method of baptism is to be found in the *Didache*. Immersion in running water was preferred, but baptism might take place by pouring. First in this manual and in the closing verse of the Gospel of Matthew is there witness to baptism in the threefold name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The necessity for baptism was taken for granted. As the Johannine Christ says, "Except you be washed, you have no part with me." But the interpretations are as varied as the expressions of Christian experience. It was associated with cleansing, with illumination, and with endowment with the Holy Spirit. Paul had interpreted baptism as union with the passion of Christ. In Hellenistic Christianity it was associated with new birth or regeneration. Naturally all of the benefits of Christian experience were associated with the sacrament of entrance into the fellowship.

3. The Ministry of the Church

Every movement needs leadership; as it crystallizes into a more definitely organized form the functions of leadership become more fixed. Paul gave the pre-eminence to the preaching ministry of the church. First of all came the *apostles,* or traveling missionaries. This was not an office confined to the Twelve, or even to distinguished missionaries like Paul and Barnabas, but included such figures as Andronicus and Junias. The *prophets* were those who had the gift of bringing revelations from the Spirit to the church. They too traveled from church to church. Early second-century documents such as The Shepherd of Hermas and the *Didache* recognized the continued existence of such "apostles and prophets." They provided a unifying factor as they circulated among the churches. The third group were the *teachers.* They expounded the Old Testament, and transmitted the Christian traditions as they trained the converts and exhorted the members.

In addition to the preaching ministry, Paul recognized various ministries of *service,* such as healings and helps. Finally, there were *"governments,"* or "those who rule." These consistently come last in his description of the "spiritual gifts" within the church. In cases of discipline, Paul appealed directly to the church, not to any particular officials. Only in his letter to Philippi are any titles given to these administrative functions. There they are called "bishops and deacons." Since this letter was an expression of appreciation for financial contributions, it is probable that they were finance officials.

The Ephesian epistle gives essentially the same list of ministers but adds pastors who rank between prophets and teachers. The word "pastor" means "shepherd," and shepherd is a standing figure in the Bible for "ruler." They were probably the bishops or *episcopoi.* This word means a "supervisor," and is to be found in a wide variety of connections in the Hellenistic world. The word translated "deacon" simply means "servant." When we turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews no particular title is used for those who rule within the church. In First Peter and James, however, the officials are referred to as "elders." This term was probably taken over from the Jewish heritage, for leadership was lodged there with a group of elders or presbyters.

In the Acts of the Apostles it is assumed that the normal government of local churches was through elders. They were associated with James at Jerusalem. Paul appointed them in his churches in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Elders from Ephesus met him in Miletus. But it is noteworthy that only "prophets and teachers" are mentioned at Antioch in Syria, and nothing is said of elders in any of the churches which Paul founded in Europe. It is clear from Acts 20 and from the Pastorals that elders and bishops were simply different titles for the same office. They were the group which ruled within the church.

4. The Authority of the Bishop

But before the end of our period, in some parts of the church, leadership had come into the hands of a single individual. This does not appear to have taken place as long as the position of the traveling apostles and prophets was unquestioned. But as these orders decayed, the local leadership of the individual congregations assumed more importance. Within the college of presbyters or bishops one came to a place of supreme authority. From being *primus inter pares* he came to be a monarchical bishop. Modern usage applies the term bishop to one who supervises an extensive diocese, but at this time he was simply the leader of the church in a given city.

Within our New Testament, Third John is the most important document in showing the struggle between the older itinerant ministry and the rising local leadership. The author calls himself simply "the Elder," but he obviously claimed wide authority. This little note was written to his friend Gaius complaining that Diotrephes, "who loves the pre-eminence," would not receive him. It is clear that this Diotrephes not only *loved* the pre-eminence but he *had* it. He had risen to supreme authority in his congregation and held the power of "mono-episcopacy" and was excluding the emissaries of the Elder.

This development is seen most clearly in the letters which Bishop Ignatius of Antioch wrote on his way to martyrdom at Rome toward the end of the reign of Trajan. Over and over again he calls for obedience to the bishop, who was a single individual like Polycarp in Smyrna and Onesimus in Ephesus. The bishop was to be obeyed as Christ is to be obeyed. No baptisms or celebrations of the Lord's Supper might take place without his approval, and marriages must also have his consent. Harmony is called for in the church, with the bishop presiding in the place of God, and the presbyters in the place of the apostles.

But not all parts of the church had reached this stage of development. It is clear from First Clement (*ca.* A.D. 96) that neither Rome nor Corinth had as yet a monarchical bishop. The author recognized a plurality of bishops or presbyters, who were appointed with the consent of the whole church. But the Roman church was impelled to write because at Corinth the regular presbyters had been put out and replaced by others. It was felt that this was contrary to the procedure decreed by God. First Clement has a fully developed doctrine of "apostolic succession." Jesus Christ was sent by God; Christ commissioned the twelve apostles to preach the gospel, and they appointed their first converts to be bishops and deacons. To rebel against the proper officials was to rebel against God. The idea of apostolic succession is also to be found in Second Timothy where "Paul" enjoins Timothy to pass on to others what he had heard from the apostle.

The Pastoral Epistles have the fullest discussion of the *qualifications* for the ministry of the church. The author was not advocating any particular form of church government. Though he speaks of "bishop" in the singular, it is not clear whether he presupposed mono-episcopacy or not. He was interested primarily in getting better men into the office. They should be self-controlled, hospitable, and not avaricious; their family life should be such as to commend the gospel to others; they should have practical gifts of leadership and also be able to teach. Among the duties of "Timothy" and the other church officials were the public reading of scripture, preaching, and teaching. But we are struck above all by the absence of stress upon what we would call deep, spiritual qualities. The very ordinary standards which are set show the desperate need for raising the quality of leadership in the church.

Presbyters were inducted into office by the laying on of hands, a custom taken over from Judaism. They were to be paid, but they must not be greedy for gain. The qualifications for deacon were similar to those for bishop. Widows are mentioned not only as objects for charity, but as a spiritual order of women devoted to prayer and good works. Yet the author is anxious to guard against abuses. Younger women were not to be enrolled and these women were not to be a charge on the church if there were relatives who could support them.

5. The Worship of the Church

Much more important than the forms of organization was the *life* found within this fellowship of believers. The standards of faith and conduct will be dealt with in later chapters. Here we shall treat of their worship.

Worship was not confined to outward ceremonies, but the entire life was man's offering to God. Therefore Paul could exhort the believers at Rome to present their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which was their spiritual service. The writer to the Hebrews states that the sacrifices with which God is pleased are "to do good and to share what you have." James defined pure worship as visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction and keeping oneself unspotted from the world. This life of service was not a substitute for private prayer; there is early witness for three stated periods for prayer during the day. Yet all of life should be an act of worship.

Regular meetings were held for the cultivation of Christian ideals and for the praise of God. These carried on the functions of the Hellenistic Jewish synagogue. But converts from gentile religions brought over no experience in regular services of worship at fixed times. The writer to the Hebrews had to protest against the negligence of many in assembling together. Special buildings are not witnessed until a later time. Either a public hall was used or the home of a wealthier member of the congregation. When he protests against discrimination against the poor in the matter of seating, James presupposes an assembly hall akin to a synagogue. From Revelation and the *Didache* it appears that the chief service took place on the Lord's Day. Other meetings were held during the week, but this was the specifically Christian day. Services were held in the early morning and in the evening, for most of the members had to work during the day.

The service of the Word included first the reading from the Old Testament scriptures. The author of the Pastorals insisted that all inspired scripture was profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. The best commentary on that verse is the letter to the Hebrews. It is really a homily based on Psalms 2, 8, 95, 110, and the covenant passage in Jeremiah 31:31-34. It was impossible for most individuals to possess copies of as voluminous literature as the Old Testament. Almost all their knowledge of it had to be gained through the reading in public worship. First Clement shows how much preaching consisted in summarizing and quoting from the Old Testament. For other examples of Christian sermons from the period, the reader should turn to First Peter and First John. They show how the Christian teacher spoke for the edification of the church. When a prophet was present, he was given opportunity to speak, but the exuberance of the early days at Corinth was no longer usual.

The instruction was followed by public prayer and the singing of hymns. First Clement gives our earliest recorded Christian prayers. Jewish models were followed and prayers were regularly addressed to God. Since Christ was looked upon as the heavenly intercessor, most prayers were uttered "through Christ" or "in the name of Christ." Hymns, however, and short ejaculations were frequently addressed to Christ. Snatches from some of these are included in the New Testament. Among them are the lines in Ephesians:

> Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead,
> And Christ shall give thee light.

In First Timothy, Christ is celebrated thus:

> He was manifested in the flesh,
> Vindicated in the Spirit,
> Seen by angels,
> Preached among the nations,
> Believed on in the world,
> Received up in glory.

Many of their hymns were adapted from Jewish compositions.

Such are the *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus,* which Luke included in his narrative of the birth of Jesus. The heavenly choruses of the book of Revelation reflect the liturgical language of the Christian worship of the time. Here we see how the *Hallelujah* (praise the Lord), the *Amen* response to prayers, and doxologies were taken over from Jewish usage.

6. THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

The Lord's Supper was still an actual meal, at least until the persecutions under Trajan. The two names for the celebration were derived from the two dominant motifs. It was a *eucharist* because they gave thanks to God for his gifts; it was an *agape* or love feast because the poor were fed, and the fellowship of the group was cemented in their common meal. It is striking that there should be so few allusions to the sacrament in the later New Testament literature. The churchly epistle to the Ephesians never mentions it. For the author of the epistle to the Hebrews religion is worship, but there is no certain allusion to the Lord's Supper. Wherever we do find reference there is no emphasis on Paul's idea of a memorial of the death of Christ. No gospel, in its correct text, records the words, "This do in remembrance of me." No writing from this period refers to the meal as a memorial. But of course the Pauline emphasis persisted in many communities and ultimately it was to triumph after his letters became "scripture."

As yet there were no fixed liturgies. Prophets were expected to depend upon the inspiration of the moment. If none was present, one of the bishops or presbyters would preside. Doubtless this presidency at the central act of worship was a prominent factor in the rise of the mono-episcopacy. Since all bishops would not be gifted in extempore prayer, models were composed for use. The earliest of these are contained in the *Didache*, but it is the beginning of the third century before we have any full liturgies. First of all came the confession of sin, in order that the offering to God might be the pure sacrifice foretold in the book of Malachi. The modern reader must not confuse the interpretation of the death of Jesus as a sacrifice with the interpretation of the common meal as a sacrifice. The latter consisted in the offering of prayers and thanksgivings to God, and likewise the food from which they were to partake after the blessing.

The early Christian *eucharist* or *agape* was far more than a fellowship meal under religious auspices. They partook of holy food. This was a sacred mystery in which the heavenly Lord was really present. That is seen in the Fourth Gospel where the evangelist gave his eucharistic teaching not in connection with the Last Supper but in an earlier discourse accompanying the feeding of the multitude. Jesus himself is the true bread which came down out of heaven to give life to the world. There is no life for men except as they eat his flesh and drink his blood. Not that anything on the plane of the flesh can profit by itself. It is the Spirit which gives life. But this life is mediated through participation in the holy food. This idea is even clearer in the letters of Ignatius, for whom the bread of God is the flesh of Jesus Christ. It is the "medicine of immortality, the antidote that we should not die, but live forever in Jesus Christ."

Would that we could sit down at one of these early Christian celebrations and see just what it meant to those participating! Inevitably gentile Christians brought over into the church some ideas from the Mysteries and from other sacrificial meals. But fundamentally, in this worship of God under the symbolism of food, they maintained the centrality of the two spiritual conceptions. In this expression of brotherhood, they offered a sacrifice to God as they shared out of a pure love. They joined to their thanksgiving for food an expression of gratitude for the life and knowledge which had come through Christ. As they partook of the broken bread in thanksgiving and love, God's blessing rested upon them and they looked forward to the time when he would gather his church from the ends of the earth into the kingdom of God.

BIBLE AND SOURCE READINGS

1. THE EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH IN THE EMPIRE: I Pet. 1:1; Rev. 7:9.
2. THE CHURCH AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD: Eph. 2:11-22; 5:25-27; I Pet. 2:9-10; I Cor. 3:10-17; Col. 1:18; Titus 3:5; Matt. 28:19; John 2:19-22; 10:3-4, 14-18; 15:1-5; 17:20-23; Rev. 21:2; *Didache* 7.

3. THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH: I Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:6-8; I Thess. 5:12-13; Phil. 1:1; Eph. 4:11-13; Heb. 13:7; I Pet. 5:1-4; Jas. 5:14; *Didache* 11–13; 15:1; Acts 13:1; 14:23; 20:17.
4. THE AUTHORITY OF THE BISHOP: III John 9-12; Ignatius, *To Ephesians* 4–6; I Clem. 42, 44; II Tim. 2:2; I Tim. 3:1-13; 4:13-14; 5:1-22.
5. THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH: Rom. 12:1; Heb. 10:25; 13:15-16; Jas. 1:27; 2:1; Rev. 1:10; II Tim. 3:16; I Clem. 59–62; I Tim. 3:13; Eph. 5:14; Luke 1:68-79; Rev. 19:1-8.
6. THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST: John 6:48-63; *Didache* 9–10, 14; Ignatius, *To Ephesians* 20:2.

CHAPTER XXII

FORMULATIONS OF THE NEW FAITH

Christianity did not begin as a new intellectual movement. It was a religious faith which had little contact with the learned. Nevertheless, no purely sociological approach can give an adequate understanding of its origin. From the outset, Christians were distinguished by definite convictions to which they gave reasoned affirmation. Christianity began as an experience rather than as a creed, but this life rested on certain objective beliefs.

1. The Faith of Paul

The letters of Paul contain the earliest formulations of this faith. Because they were real letters, they also contain much else. It is a mistake to look upon Paul primarily as a theologian. Because he was a great missionary, we have sought to reconstruct the essence of his gospel message. Because he was the great defender of the gentile mission, we have examined his arguments for a law-free gospel. Now we shall attempt a somewhat more systematic summary of his faith, as a background for the developments of Christian teaching during the period with which we are now dealing.

There were three aspects to the faith of Paul: (*a*) Deliverance by Christ was an event of the past in his death and resurrection for men. (*b*) Deliverance was an experience of the present as men entered into mystical union with their exalted Lord. (*c*) Deliverance was a consummation still in the future, when he would come for those who were united in his body.

a) One word which is strikingly missing from the letters of Paul is "repentance." The reason is that Paul believed that great obstacles had stood in the way of man's salvation. Until these were removed, it was futile simply to appeal to men to repent. Paul urged them to appropriate what had been done for them. The first barrier lay in the hostile principalities and powers. Men lived in a fallen universe, subject to elemental spirits; these rulers of this age were the real authors of the crucifixion of Jesus. In the second place, men were creatures of flesh, a power which made sin almost irresistible. Finally, they were subject to a law which they could not keep; because of that they stood under a curse. This, in outline, was man's extremity, a situation which was hopeless apart from some deliverance.

But God had provided deliverance by the death and resurrection of Christ. He was God's victor over the God-opposing powers. In the cross and resurrection, he had triumphed over the fallen angelic powers. Also, sin in the flesh had been condemned in Christ; his death did not mean the victory of sin, but was a triumph over it. Finally, the obligation to the law, which men could not fulfill, had been canceled by Christ. Though sinless himself, he had suffered the penalty for the curse of the law, and thus (Paul insisted) had redeemed men from it.

We may quote Paul's own language in his letter to the Colossians: "The Father . . . . delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son. . . . . He cancelled the indictment which stood against us, with its legal demands; he set it aside, nailing it to the cross. Disarming the principalities and powers, he made a public example of them, triumphing over them."

This mythological language seems very remote from the experience of twentieth-century men and women. But we may well ask if it does not describe real aspects of experience. Do we not meet God-opposing forces, though we interpret them in very different ways? But no matter how alien the concept may seem, we must try to think Paul's thoughts after him. Christianity meant to him first of all *grateful acceptance of the deliverance which Christ had brought*. This was not a private transaction between God and the individual soul; it was a cosmic redemption which would ultimately include even the physical world now "groaning in travail, waiting for the redemption of the sons of God." The acceptance of this redemption was by faith. Faith was believing reception of the deliverance in Christ.

b) Paul believed in a representative death which had taken place in the past. He likewise believed in a present union between the believer and Christ. This meant nothing less than dying with him and rising to a new life. The death took place dramatically in baptism when the believer went down under the water. It continued as men shared in the sufferings of Christ which came through their devotion to him. Paul could write to the Colossians, "I rejoice in sufferings for your sake, and complete what remains of Christ's afflictions in my flesh for the sake of his body, that is the church."

Paul never spoke of mystical union with God. His mysticism (if we may apply that word to his devotional expressions of intense fellowship with his Lord) was always a Christ mysticism. This did not arise from man's initiative, but was a response to God's gracious activity. "In Christ" is the most characteristic Pauline phrase, occurring about one hundred forty times in his letters. The follower who wrote Ephesians used the phrase twenty-five times in his six chapters. "Christ in me" is only a variant. "It is no longer I that live, but Christ who lives in me." Some men were possessed by demons, but the believer who had been baptized into Christ had Christ dwelling in him. Christ and his church comprised one body.

If the Lord who is the Spirit dwells in the believer, then he possesses the "mind of Christ." The Christian does not obey external teachings of Jesus mediated through a human tradition, but is moved by the Christ spirit within him. Paul does not say, "Imitate Jesus"; he calls on men to imitate the Christ who dwelt in Paul. Thus the Christian life was not obedience to law, but following the freedom of the divine Spirit. The Christian virtues were the fruit of the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

c) Union with Christ meant finally sharing in his resurrection. The new life in the Spirit was only the "earnest" or "down payment" on the coming salvation. When Christ appeared he would change our body of humiliation into the likeness of his own body of glory. Paul was pressing on toward perfection, toward the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. This was not simply ethical progress. The aim was that he might attain the resurrection from the dead, for deliverance was a consummation yet to come.

We must realize this fact if we are to understand Paul's social philosophy. He believed that "in Christ" all human differences were eliminated. But, until his coming, the present orders of the world were to be accepted. "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female"; yet for the balance of the present age he assumed the continuance of the patriarchal family and the institution of slavery. He advocated no change in social institutions; this makes the apostle the refuge of the conservatives in all time.

But they overlook the fact that Paul believed in a great revolutionary overturning which was just at hand. The Spirit was God's pledge of the certainty of the coming redemption. Paul's conception of salvation was not one which left men in misery and want and need. Whatever sufferings might be involved in dying with Christ were as nothing compared with the glory of the coming redemption.

What the modern man misses most in Paul's exposition of Christian faith is a positive evaluation of the life and teachings of Jesus. And yet the Master and his apostle are much closer together than most superficial readers suppose. The permanent importance of Paul lies in the way in which he held together the idea of salvation by Christ with that of the coming kingdom of God. Central for him were *grace, faith,* and *love.* Without them, religious belief will never be Christian.

2. The Earliest Apologetic

The first systematic apology for Christian faith was the letter to the Hebrews. Its author held a uniquely original conception of the nature of Christianity and a firm conviction concerning its finality. His argument took the form of a comparison of the perfect access to God through the sacrifice of Christ with the shadow of this reality found in Judaism. Despite the fact that the author was writing to a predominantly gentile church, gentile religions were ignored and no pagan divinities or heroes were drawn into the comparison. Christianity was the best religion because it was better than the next best.

The author had no intention of rejecting the Old Testament. On the contrary, his homily was a Christian interpretation of a series of Old Testament passages. God had spoken to the fathers by the prophets in many and various ways. Moses had been faithful as a servant in God's house. Aaron had been called by God as high priest to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin. The heroes who had faith were the great characters of the Old Testament like Abraham; they were the cloud of witnesses who challenged those living "in these last days" to run their race with perseverance.

But God's salvation had waited for the coming of the Son, who stood far above even the angels through whom the law had been given. Moses and Joshua had not led the people of God into his sabbath rest; their bodies had fallen in the wilderness and that "rest" still remained. Aaron and his successors had not brought access to God by their priestly ministry. The blood of bulls and goats had no power to cleanse the conscience of men. The Old Testament heroes, though well attested by their faith, did not receive the promise, since God had foreseen some better thing. Jeremiah had spoken of a new covenant which he would make with men, and that had now been ratified.

The details of the earthly life of Jesus did not figure in the author's presentation. The eternal Son had been made for a little time lower than the angels. He partook completely of human nature and learned obedience through suffering and temptation. But the author does not quote a single word from the teaching of Jesus. As in Paul, the stress was laid on what Christ *did for* men, not on what he *said to* them. Like the great apostle, this author found in the work of Christ the destruction of the one who had the power of death. But beyond that, his line of argument was entirely different.

For the writer to the Hebrews, religion was essentially worship. What men needed was a priestly sacrifice which could bring access to God. The author thought in terms not only of the contrast between this age and the age to come. As in Alexandrian Judaism, he believed that the world of heavenly realities stood opposed to the earthly copies. We may summarize his argument under five headings: (1) the qualifications for the priesthood; (2) the order of Melchizedek; (3) the sanctuary; (4) the offering; (5) the result.

(1) No valid priest could be self-appointed. The writer found the call of Jesus in the 110th Psalm, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek" (110:4). Likewise, a priest must

be able to sympathize with those in need. Jesus had been tempted, yet without sin; he had learned obedience through what he had suffered and thus became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.

(2) Obviously Jesus had not been a priest in the Temple at Jerusalem. Since he belonged to the tribe of Judah, he would not have been eligible. But he belonged to the higher order of Melchizedek. That king's priesthood had not depended upon bodily descent, but his worth was testified by the fact that Abraham paid tithes to him. The priesthood of Jesus was of this kind; it did not depend upon bodily descent, but its validity was doubly certain because it had been inaugurated by an oath. Jesus did not need a successor, for he remained eternal. He did not have to offer for his own sins, because he was sinless. A law was inseparable from the priesthood which it decreed. Therefore the law of Moses had been abolished by the coming of this higher order of Melchizedek.

(3) The sanctuary on earth was divided by a curtain, which symbolized the inaccessibility of God. The high priest alone entered the Holy of Holies, and he but once in the year. But this was only a copy of the heavenly reality. This heavenly altar had required a better sacrifice than those on earth. Now Christ appeared directly and continually in the presence of God on behalf of men.

(4) The writer assumed the ancient idea of the cathartic power of blood. Under the old order, the priests had sprinkled the blood of bulls and goats on the altar. Jesus had not offered the blood of other victims; he had offered himself. The figure of a sacrifice and that of a priest are united. As the victim, he had been slain on the cross. But the slaying of the victim was not essentially a priestly act. As priest, Jesus offered his own blood at the heavenly altar. This death and sacrifice were not repeatable; once for all he had appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Self-sacrifice was the only one pleasing to God.

(5) This perfect sacrifice had brought purification of conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Christ had perfected for all time those who were consecrated. His blood had ratified the new covenant predicted in Jeremiah (31:31-34). Though that passage contained no hint of any need for a sacrifice to confirm God's will for men, the writer to the Hebrews could not conceive of religion apart from sacrifice. He had no theory of sacrifice.

Never does he speak of propitiating the wrath of God. Nor does he indicate how the blood of Christ could cleanse the conscience of men. Assuming the premises of a blood ritual, he affirmed the fact of the perfect access to God through Christ. His sacrificial work was complete and now he ever lives to make intercession for men.

The writer to the Hebrews still believed in the imminent end of the age. Christ would appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but for the salvation of those who were expecting him. God had promised to shake once more both the heavens and the earth. In the light of that event, the believer was not to rest back in the assurance that judgment had been replaced by grace. The conclusion which this teacher drew was quite different. The greater the salvation the greater the responsibility to heed its demands! He continually interrupted his doctrinal exposition with stirring exhortations. The author had a stern message. If his readers apostatized from the faith, there was no more a sacrifice for sin, but a fearful prospect of judgment. True, the blood of Jesus spoke of grace, not revenge like the blood of Abel. But "our God is a consuming fire."

This majestic exposition of Christian faith clearly reveals its conditioning by the forms of thought of the first century. Yet with all of its distinctiveness, it expresses the central conviction of the early Christians. *God had performed a definitive and final act of salvation for men in Christ.* The author's affirmations tended to destroy the very assumptions which provided the framework for his argument. For, if it seems to us almost perverse to present Jesus the layman as a priest, the result was an interpretation of faith that would forever eliminate human priests. Complete access to God had once for all been made possible by the Son, through whom God had spoken his final word.

3. THE COMMON FAITH OF THE POSTAPOSTOLIC CHURCH

For Jesus, faith had consisted in simple trust in God. For Paul, faith was obedient acceptance of the deliverance which God had provided in Christ. For the writer to the Hebrews, faith was adventurous living, trusting in the future and invisible rather than the present and visible. But in postapostolic times, faith came more and more to be looked upon as a body of doctrine. Faith tended to become acceptance of "the faith." The first steps were taken toward a creedal religion. Particularly in the Pastoral Epistles is there stress upon "sound doctrine." Faith is the "deposit" which God had entrusted and which was to be guarded intact. Hence correct knowledge becomes important; for First John the right belief about Christ almost superseded trust in him. The climax came in the exhortation of Jude to strive for "the faith once and for all delivered to the saints."

Despite such phrases, most of the New Testament doctrine is presupposed rather than taught. It is a point of view which is *assumed* rather than definitely formulated. Though variations certainly existed, it would be wrong to present the theology of each contributor to the New Testament. These writers were not distinctive theologians, but preachers of a common faith, laying emphases which depended on their individuality and the particular needs of the hour. Five points may be singled out on which there was general agreement.

a) It was assumed and sometimes stated that God was the *almighty Creator of heaven and earth*. In the main we must depend here not upon formal teaching about God but upon the liturgical ascriptions of praise. In contrast to pagan images, he was invisible. In contrast to motionless substance, he was the living God. He was the Father and Savior, but he was also the righteous and holy Judge. Though the heavenly bodies may change, he was unchanging; he can neither be tempted nor does he tempt men.

b) God had redeemed men through his Son Jesus Christ. Sometimes the figure of sacrifice is used, as in Hebrews. Sometimes the analogy of a ransom is employed, though nowhere are we told to whom the ransom had been paid. No theory of salvation is worked out, except that it is clear that men were not saved *from* God, but *by* God. The term "Savior" was now frequently applied to Christ, as had not been the case during the apostolic age. Instead of finding a theory of redemption, we meet the beginning of those historical affirmations about Jesus which were later to bulk so large in the Apostles' Creed. He had been born of the seed of David, he had witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, he had been crucified and raised from the dead, and soon would appear in glory.

One interesting development was the belief in the descent into Hades. The reference in First Peter has some ambiguities, but the most likely interpretation is that Christ preached to the dead during the interval between his death and resurrection. This had given opportunity to offer the gospel to the worthies of old. The particular groups mentioned by the writer were the fallen angelic spirits and the Noah generation. These were among the classes for whom Jewish theology extended no hope. But Peter does not say whether he thought that Christ's preaching to these was for judgment or salvation.

The three writers to which we are giving independent treatment all refer to Christ as the mediator of creation. This belief does not appear in any of the other representatives of the common faith. Nevertheless, it was doubtless held by many who turned to reflection. At least they were sure that *the source of redemption was none other than the source of creation.*

c) Usually Christianity was looked upon as bringing men a "new birth." For James Christians have been brought forth by the word of truth. For First Peter they have been begotten again from incorruptible seed through the word of God. For First John the children of God are such because they have his seed abiding in them. For the author of the Pastorals baptism was a "washing of regeneration." This figure of a new birth was frequent in the Hellenistic world. It provided a vivid expression of the reality of the *new beginning* which believers had found in Christ. Old things had already passed away, and they had been born anew into a higher world.

d) Christianity also meant a *new law.* Paul's victory over the Jewish law did not mean a permanent driving out of all legalism from the church. Christ as the new lawgiver was a widespread interpretation in the postapostolic period. We see it in the evangelist Matthew, for whom Christ was the greater Moses who ascended the mountain to deliver the new law. We see it in James as he commends the royal law of liberty. This new law was not the Mosaic law, but the moral law as it came to be enforced in the ethical teaching of the church. Chapter XXIV will be devoted to the various problems in the moral training of the converts and to the content of the specific demands.

e) Finally, Christians shared in the confident hope of the coming of the kingdom of God. They had been begotten to a living hope, now reserved in the heavens, but ready to be revealed at the last time. In Chapter XXVI we shall deal more at length with the reinterpretations which were forced upon the church with the passing of time.

4. Christian Faith According to John

In many ways, the climactic expression of Christian faith within the New Testament is the gospel according to John. This remarkable author gave a unique interpretation in which some of the more Palestinian emphases were sloughed off and belief was translated into terms which have found a more universal appeal. The evangelist portrayed the exalted Lord of the church projected back into the life of Jesus. Whatever is said by the historical Jesus is said in the spirit of the eternal Christ. The presentation involved a constant polemic against the Judaism which denied the claims of the church. In the opening prologue, the author claimed everything for Jesus that the Jews claimed for the law. He did not draw upon Greek philosophical speculation; his *logos* is very different from that of the later apologists. Oriental myths have influenced his interpretation of Christ much more than philosophical concepts.

The pre-existent Christ had enjoyed a vision of God such as no one else could have. This gave him a perfect knowledge of the being of God and full participation in the divine glory. This "logos" of God had become flesh, though a veil of secrecy lay over the "how." He was the one whom God had sent. As such he was the *revealer*. The revelation which he brought was first of all concerning himself. He was the sole bearer of life and light and truth. These originated in God and could be received only through the one whom God had sent. To these heavenly realities Christ had borne testimony. His words were supported by his deeds which were the revelation of his power and glory.

Though the life of Jesus was lived under human circumstances, it was a life apart from all other humanity. In absolute dependence on the Father, he did only what he saw the Father doing. His teaching was not his own, but since he came from the Father he knew whence he came and whither he was going. All of the secrets of the hearts of men were open to him. He never acted on human invitation but only when the divine intimation came. What he was and what he gave were the same. That was because he himself was the "bread of life," the "water of life," and the "light of the world." In response to the request, "Show us the Father and we shall be satisfied," the Johannine Christ replied, "He who has seen me has seen the Father."

The light of this revelation had come into the world of darkness, but the darkness had not been able to overcome it. Those whom God had given to the Son heard his voice and responded. They came to Jesus and in coming to him came to the Father. Those who were not his sheep had not believed; they were not drawn by the Father. The coming of this revelation had brought the judgment or *crisis,* dividing men according to their response to the light. The sons of the devil could not believe. There is no thought of the reconciliation of all sinful humanity to God. Knowledge of the truth comes only to those who belong to the truth. The rest of the world remain in darkness.

The supreme gift of Christ is *eternal life.* The Johannine Christ affirms, "I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly." This life consists in knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus Christ whom God had sent. Reception of that life comes through belief and baptism. He who believes on him will not perish but have eternal life. This belief arises through hearing the word and seeing the works. In believing on him they also believe on him who had sent the Son out of his love for the world. But baptism was also necessary. The man who was born blind must wash in the pool as well as believe in the word of Jesus. Man is born again from above by water as well as by the Spirit.

As the good shepherd (ruler), Jesus laid down his life for his sheep. That was the final proof of his love for his own, and it brought the victory over the prince of this world. When he was lifted up on the cross it became a ladder for his ascent to the heavenly world, where he could resume the glory which he had shared with the Father before the world was created. He and the Father send another Helper to defend and instruct the believers who remain in the tribulation of the world. Christ himself remains as the heavenly intercessor with the Father; therefore prayer in his name is certain to be answered.

Yet Christ also comes in a little while to his own. The new life of the believer is one of mystic fellowship with the Son and with the Father. The believer abides in Christ like a branch in a vine. There is no life for the branches except as they abide in the vine. Likewise there is no life for the believer except as he abides in Christ. One of the ways in which this is possible is through the eucharist. This union is an ethical fellowship which consists in keeping his commandments, especially that of love for the brethren. In contrast to Paul, this mystic fellowship includes also the fellowship with God. "I am in my Father and you in me and I in you." The final prayer of the Johannine Christ is for the consummation of that spiritual union. "As thou art in me and I in thee, that they may be in us."

The teaching of the Fourth Gospel is presented largely in these symbols. They must be filled with content from the traditions which dealt with the more historical aspects of faith. It is clear from the synoptic tradition that Jesus had not talked about himself in the way in which he is here presented. But the importance of the portrait which John gives is not limited to the historical information which he was able to add. More basic is the truth of his interpretation: *Jesus was the one whom God had sent to reveal his truth.* We must turn to other gospels for much of the *content* of the truth; they will tell us better just *how* Christ is the revelation of God. But the ultimate claims of Christian faith are more definitely formulated in the Fourth Gospel than anywhere else in the New Testament.

BIBLE READINGS

1. THE FAITH OF PAUL
   - *a*) *Deliverance in the past:* Col. 2:8-15; 1:13, 20-22.
   - *b*) *Present fellowship with Christ:* Rom. 6:1-23; Col. 1:24-27; 3:3.
   - *c*) *Future Consummation:* Rom. 8:18-25; Phil. 3:10-16, 20-21; 4:5.
2. THE EARLIEST APOLOGETIC: Heb. 1:1-4; 3:1-5; 5:1-10; 7:1-28; 8:1-6; 9:1-28: 10:11-31; 11:1-12, 39-40; 12:1-2, 18-29.
3. THE COMMON FAITH OF THE POSTAPOSTOLIC CHURCH
   - *a*) *God:* I Tim. 1:17; 6:15; Jas. 1:13-17; I Pet. 1:17; 4:19.
   - *b*) *Redemption:* I Pet. 1:18-19; 3:18-22; 4:6; I Tim. 2:5-6; 6:13; II Tim. 1:10; 2:8; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:2; John 1:3.

- *c*) *New Birth:* I Pet. 1:3, 23; Jas. 1:18; I John 3:9; John 3:5; Tit. 3:5.
- *d*) *New Law:* Jas. 1:25; 2:8.
- *e*) *Hope:* I Pet. 1:3-5; I John 2:18; Jas. 5:7; II Tim. 3:1.

4. CHRISTIAN FAITH ACCORDING TO JOHN: John 1:1-18; 3:3-21, 31-36; 4:21-26; 5:19-47; 6:26-40; 8:31-59; 10:1-39; 12:44-50; 14:6-17; 16:6-17; 17:1-19; 15:1-10.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE COMBATING OF FALSE TEACHING

WHEN a person today asks, "What is Christian teaching?" he may be referred to various creeds, confessions, and formulations of faith which have received authoritative approval. But in the first century there was no recognized court of appeal. Faced with a bewildering variety of doctrines in which Christ was named, the second-century Christians had to work out some basis for a norm or standard. Already during the period from 70 to 115, there was real danger that the teaching of the church would be drawn into the syncretism of the time.

The expositions of Christian faith which were given in the previous chapter were those which came to be accepted as "orthodox" during the second half of the second century. These writers referred to those who disagreed with them as "false teachers." The modern reader must not forget that they would have returned the epithet. What is "false" depends on our criterion of the true. Only the test of time could determine which group would successfully establish its claim to the name "Christian."

In the year 100 it is probable that many of those who honored Jesus in some way adhered to doctrines which two generations later were branded as heresy. It may be that the beginning of Christianity in such regions as Alexandria and Edessa in Mesopotamia did not come through orthodox teachers. The later Catholic Christians did not preserve an account after they had won the victory. The books which are preserved in our New Testament come exclusively from the groups which consolidated in opposition to the "Gnostic" heretics.

1. The Beginnings of Dangerous Speculation

As the church increased in numbers and people of widely divergent backgrounds were baptized, they brought into the church the popular religious conceptions of the age. How receptive could the new faith be, and when did the amalgam become something different from Christian faith? The line had to be found between the spirit of toleration essential to living growth, and the insistence upon that distinctiveness which characterized the Christian gospel. It was not easy to draw, for as intensely Jewish a soul as Paul absorbed more than he realized from the Hellenistic religious world. There is some evidence that Hellenistic Judaism had already assimilated ideas from the Mysteries, and speculative tendencies were clearly at work amid many diaspora Jews.

In his letter to the Colossians we see Paul already opposing a type of theosophical teaching which advocated angel worship and a dualistic view of the world. It is clear from the later books of the New Testament that these tendencies continued to grow in Asia Minor. The Paul of the Acts of the Apostles predicted to the Ephesian elders that after his death many grievous wolves would enter in. Cerinthus is the chief name that belongs to our period. Later tradition speaks of clashes between him and the apostle John, who refused to enter a bath when he heard that Cerinthus was there.

Irenaeus, who wrote about A.D. 180, referred to Simon Magus as the first heretic. Simon went to Rome, according to Justin, during the reign of Claudius. He was associated with a Helen of Tyre, identified with "the lost sheep." He himself was the "Power" of God to rescue men. Simon was followed by Menander, and later by Saturninus in Antioch. Samaria and other parts of Syria were evidently rife with teachings which were off the main line of development. The Gospel of Matthew warned, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."

It is difficult to describe these "false teachings" in detail because of the methods followed in combating them. In II Timothy 2:20-26 a very tolerant attitude is taken; as a big house contains many kinds of vessels, a church will have many kinds of teachers. But elsewhere the rigid demand is to expel them from the fellowship for fear their contaminating influence will corrupt the church. In I Timothy 1:19-20 some are even handed over to Satan, the minister of death. In the Pastorals the false teachers are still in the church, but in First John they have gone outside. The elaborate systems of the later Gnostics were met by the Catholic fathers with some attempt at reasoned refutation. But in the New Testament, the polemic against the false teaching consists largely in denunciation and in the citing of invidious parallels with Old Testament sinners. Hence it is difficult to draw a clear picture of these doctrines.

2. The Gnostic View of Religion

One is tempted to apply the word "syncretistic" to these teachings. But in fact all religions are more or less syncretistic. Three elements were compounded in these deviations from what was accepted as apostolic Christianity: Jewish speculations, oriental dualistic theosophy, and Greek religious philosophy. The resultant mixture of ideas varied greatly, and very different practical conclusions were also drawn. But these were common elements which were mingled by a pseudo intellectualism. Religion did not consist so much in a right relation to God as in the possession of some esoteric "knowledge." This "knowledge" was not a rational organization of experience, but something which was revealed only to a select number. We may attempt here a brief outline of some of the more frequent and important aspects of this "knowledge."

Matter was looked upon as essentially evil. Salvation did not consist in resurrection into the age to come but in release from the world of matter. The world had not been made by the Father but by a lower deity. The heavenly Christ was not born in human flesh, but he descended on the man Jesus in the form of a dove at baptism. He had descended through the heavens to redeem the spiritual element in man. The believer must abstain from participation in the world of the flesh, because it is essentially evil; or, it might be held that nothing material had any effect upon salvation, for redemption is only of the "soul," which possesses the true "knowledge." This is available only for the select view.

A brief description like this involves much oversimplification, but it will serve as a background to clarify the "orthodox" attack on these false teachings. First we shall draw upon the Pastoral

Epistles (First and Second Timothy and Titus) for examples of their general denunciation. One reason why these are so vague is that the second-century pseudonymous author was using the authority of Paul to combat the dangerous developments in Asia Minor of his own time. Then we shall describe the more specific tendencies toward asceticism, antinomianism, and a docetic Christology. Most of these find their common root in the idea that the material world is inherently sinful and the goal of salvation is release from its toils.

The author of the Pastorals wrote to support "sound teaching" and to oppose a "different doctrine." This consisted in "myths and genealogies," especially Jewish fables. The Old Testament presented a fertile field for genealogical speculation, especially when this was joined to the idea of successive generations of the heavenly aeons. But for "Paul" these teachings led only to "stupid and senseless controversies" and to "contradictions." They were irrelevant for good conduct and only induced "wranglings and disputes" and "godless chatter." The mysterious rites of these teachers exalted magic practices like those which Moses had opposed at the court of Pharaoh. They wormed their way into households and led astray weak women. They were mockers and impostors who misused scripture to their own destruction. They were depraved in mind and bereft of the truth, imagining that godliness was a means of gain.

In contrast, the true doctrine was based on belief in one God; the material world was not made by a lower deity. There was one mediator between God and man, not a succession of heavenly or angelic revealers. That one mediator was the *man* Christ Jesus. His human life was in every sense real. Salvation was not reserved for a small clientele of initiates who had received the special knowledge. It was the will of God our Savior that *all* men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. The resurrection was not something that had already taken place, as Hymenaeus and Philetus contended; it would come first at the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The Danger of Asceticism

In one direction, the false teachings led to asceticism. Already in his letter to the Romans Paul wrote to oppose vegetarianism and sabbatarianism. He insisted that what a man eats does not separate him from God; the kingdom of God does not consist in eating and drinking but in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Yet Paul had a genuine concern for the "weak" who were not yet emancipated from taboos on certain foods. Genuine love would never permit the work of God to be overthrown for the sake of meat. The strong must bear with the infirmities of the weak. Probably here the background was exclusively that of a Jewish legalism and it did not yet involve an ultimate dualism.

In his later letter to the Colossians, Paul insisted that his readers should not be judged by meat and drink. To accept taboos in these realms was an indication that they were still living under the principalities and powers of this world, from which Christ had delivered them. The ascetic slogans, "Touch not," "Taste not," "Handle not," had no place in a Christian ethic. They had only a show of wisdom, and were of no value in opposing serious evil. Here Paul was opposing a more dualistic world view which demanded abstention from things in the material world which were supposed to bring contamination.

In the same passages, Paul likewise opposed sabbatarianism and the setting aside of special religious days. What was at stake was not particular customs of worship, but observances ultimately based on the honoring of planetary deities. Paul did not believe that what was inherently good became evil on certain days. Here again, at least in Romans, he took a tolerant, brotherly attitude. One man esteemed one day above another; another esteemed every day alike. Let each man be assured in his own conscience, for life was lived in relation to God, not to the scruples of those still in bondage to the elemental spirits.

The false teachers opposed in the Pastorals also advocated asceticism. That must be borne in mind in judging the advice to Timothy, "Stop drinking water only, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake." Timothy was to give no encouragement to those who demanded abstention from foods and who forbade marriage. Foods had been created by God to be received with thanksgiving. Every creation of God was good, and nothing was to be rejected if it was taken with thanksgiving. Marriage was not defiling nor was procreation to be avoided, but women should marry and bear children. It was a false spirituality to reject the bodily and material side of life. Bodily discipline had some value, but it could not compare with godliness, which had promise of the life to come. To the pure all things were pure; defilement did not come from the world of matter but from the impure heart.

It must be admitted that not all of the ascetic spirit of the age was resisted by the early church. Despite Jesus' criticism of fasting, it crept back into the church as a regular prescribed practice. The *Didache* prescribed that their fasting should not be with the hypocrites on Mondays and Thursdays, but on Wednesdays and Fridays. In Revelation, John gives a preferred place to the "virgins." But the main line of Christian teaching refused to accept any asceticism which would admit that the world of matter was other than the creation of the good God. Though it was now a fallen and sinful world, its maker had pronounced it good.

4. The Peril of Antinomianism

The opposite tendency was toward antinomianism. That peril was inherent in Paul's doctrine of salvation by faith only. He had to face it as he drew the implications of a law-free gospel for men living amid a licentious civilization. He insisted that Christian liberty did not mean license to follow the desires of the flesh. After dismissing the legalistic road to salvation, Paul brought back the essence of Jewish ethics as the "fruit of the Spirit" and the "law of Christ." The Spirit should generate new and higher virtues in the Christian believer. The Christian had been freed from the law, but only to become a slave to Christ.

Nevertheless, Paul's position was open to misunderstanding in the later days. If salvation was by faith only and not by doing what the law demanded, was conduct really important? It appears that a left-wing Paulinism developed which had little of the serious ethical purpose of the great apostle. The letter of James is clearly opposed to this. Any separation of faith and works was in his eyes vicious. James discussed the same Old Testament characters cited by Paul, but insisted that Abraham had been justified by his "works." Religious belief was barren if it was not accompanied by good conduct. Of course Paul would have agreed heartily to this, but it is unlikely that James had ever read his letters. What he opposed was unfortunate developments in the direction of antinomianism.

Particularly in the Gospel of Matthew is there opposition to this "lawlessness." Though men cast out demons, Jesus will repudiate them if they work lawlessness. In the interpretation of the parable, the weeds in the field are compared with those in the kingdom (church) who practice lawlessness. In First John it is insisted that all "lawlessness" is sin. The background for these legalistic expressions was an antinomian trend which bordered on libertinism.

In the book of Revelation, these are called Nicolaitans. John believed that they had gone much too far in accommodation to the world. He accused them of not rejecting food sacrificed to idols and of "committing fornication." It is impossible to say whether this meant sexual license, or whether the expression stood for disloyalty to God, as so often in the Old Testament. The worship of heathen gods was "fornication." But since this did often imply sexual rites, the Nicolaitans may have held that sexual conduct was morally indifferent. John called it "the teaching of Balaam," who according to Numbers 31:16 had seduced Israel to sin. The woman who was the leader at Thyatira was called Jezebel, the queen who had led Israel into heathendom. Clearly the issue was: how complete separation from the customs of a pagan civilization did Christianity demand?

It is in the little letter of Jude that we find the sharpest attack on antinomianism. This postapostolic writer—who simply describes himself as a brother of James—wrote to oppose those who were perverting the grace of God into licentiousness. He appealed to the judgment of God on the rebellious sinners of the past. Now these false teachers were boldly carousing together at the community love feasts. Not only were they malcontents and boasters, but they followed after their own passions. He drew upon his flamboyant vocabulary to compare the false teachers with everything futile, and finally commended his readers to God, who is able to keep them from falling and to present them without blemish before his presence.

5. Docetic Christology

The third specific field for false teaching lay in the interpretation of Jesus. Strange as it may appear to a modern reader, there was no occasion for attack upon the idea of a purely human Jesus. The later Jewish Christians held essentially that view, but none of our New Testament books deals specifically with them. On gentile soil, Jesus was early looked upon as a divine being. Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, wrote over and over again of "our God Jesus." For the gentile Christian of that time, it was much easier to believe in the "divinity" of Christ than that God's saving activity had been expressed through a life lived in human flesh.

The docetic heresy was widespread. Many teachers held in various ways that the divine Christ had only artificially been joined to the man Jesus at baptism. Since a god could not suffer, it was only the human Jesus who had endured the passion, or, it might be held that his suffering was only a semblance. It is against the background of such ideas that we must understand the stress in Ignatius and the Johannine writings upon "the flesh." Christ was no spiritual phantom, but he had been truly born in the flesh; "the word became flesh."

The author of the letters of John insisted that Jesus was the Christ come in the flesh. One must confess Jesus, not simply a heavenly Christ. He had come not only with the water (of baptism) but also with the blood. In other words, Jesus Christ had actually died. In more subtle ways, the Gospel of John opposed these docetic false teachers. He portrayed a Christ who was weary as he sat by the well at Samaria; he had wept by the grave of Lazarus. Simon of Cyrene was dropped entirely from the story of the crucifixion; John insisted that Jesus had carried his own cross. He was not a phantom spirit but a creature of flesh and blood which could be handled and from whose side had flowed blood and water. In the letters of Ignatius we see how many phrases in the Apostles' Creed arose out of the need to oppose this docetism. "Jesus Christ was truly born of Mary, both ate and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died . . . . was truly raised from the dead."

Some of these writers were undoubtedly harsh in their denunciation of the false teachers. We must recognize that in controversy, and especially in religious controversy, few men are objective enough to be completely fair to their opponents. There was a temptation to equate unsound doctrine with moral perversity. When we hear these false teachers called "ungodly men" we would like to have the judgment of other witnesses also. First John accused them of lack of love, but when at the same time this author demanded that his readers have nothing to do with these antichrists, one might ask how much love he was showing toward the heretics. The author of the Pastorals accused the false teachers of greed for "filthy lucre," but at the same time he insisted for the elders that "a laborer is worthy of his hire." It would be hasty to assume that the "false teachers" had any monopoly on the failings to which religious teachers are subject.

Nevertheless, I have no hesitancy in expressing my personal judgment that in every case the position taken by the Catholic party was the sound one. They could not agree that the material world was inherently evil, that salvation was only for a limited few, or that the human life of Jesus had been unreal. They could accept neither asceticism nor antinomianism. They charted a middle course which conserved the essential insights of the gospel. The leaders were fallible men, and men of limited intellectual capacities. But that only makes clearer that the insight which guided their affirmations and rejections deserves to be looked upon as the guidance of the Holy Spirit "which will lead you into all the truth."

BIBLE AND SOURCE READINGS

1. The Beginnings of Dangerous Speculation: Col. 2:8, 18; Acts 8:9-11, 18-24; II Tim. 2:20-26.
2. The Gnostic View of Religion: I Tim. 1:3-7, 18-20; 2:4-5; 6:3-5, 20-21; II Tim. 2:14-18; 4:3-4; Titus 1:10-14; 3:9-11.
3. The Danger of Asceticism: Rom. 14; Col. 2:16, 20-23; I Tim. 4:1-8; Titus 1:15; *Didache* 8:1.
4. The Peril of Antinomianism: Jas. 2:14-26; Jude 3-25; Matt. 7:15, 22-23; 13:37-43; Rev. 2:14-16, 20-22.
5. Docetic Christology: I John 1:1-2; 4:1-3; II John 7; John 4:5-6; 11:35; 19:17; Ignatius, *To Smyrna* 2, *To Tralles* 9.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE MORAL INSTRUCTION OF NEW CONVERTS

Early Christian ethics cannot be compared with the systems of morality developed by the ancient Greek philosophers or by modern systematic thinkers. It was the moral discipline of a religious group which sought separation from a sinful world. Early Christian teachers were not concerned with a systematic theory about the moral life; they endeavored to inculcate the duties required of those who had been baptized into the Christian community. Believers must be holy as the God who had called them was holy.

All early Christian teachers assumed that the will of God was the norm for the good life. In the background of their mind was the expectation that God would soon judge the world in righteousness. But we put this in a false perspective if we describe it in terms of the sanction of rewards and punishments. The framework of all early Christian thinking was the expectation of the kingdom of God. The life of the kingdom was a life of righteousness. If Christian redemption did not eventuate in holy living, man's salvation was imperiled.

1. Sources of Ethical Teaching

The sources for the ethical instruction of the early Christian teachers were three. We think first of all of the *teaching of Jesus*. Since the canonical gospels were all written during the period between 65-115 their ethical teaching must have been used in the life of the church. Yet it is striking that no general letter quotes a word of Jesus as such. James has many points of contact with the synoptic tradition, but he gives his instruction in his own name. A few words of Jesus are cited in the contemporary First Clement.

But it must be confessed that as the church began to settle down in the world, though the pure ethic of the absolute kingdom of God was still preserved, it was not the usual basis of moral exhortation.

A second source of ethical instruction lay in the teaching used in the *Hellenistic synagogue* for the training of proselytes. In each case, the moral discipline of the converts called for similar exhortations. When analogous patterns are followed by different early Christian writers it does not mean that they were necessarily borrowing from each other. They were employing material and devices derived from the moral catechisms developed in Hellenistic Judaism.

That leads to the third source. Hellenistic Judaism drew not only from the Old Testament; it also adapted material from the *popular philosophy* of the time. The Christians likewise employed tables of duties and catalogues of vices and virtues ultimately based on these models rather than upon the teaching of Jesus.

Care must be taken, however, to avoid the impression that early Christianity simply borrowed its ethics. All of the material was adapted to the needs and ideals of the church. The classic tetrad of virtues in Plato is never developed. The word "virtue" is used only once in the New Testament. The usual Greek word for happiness, from which we get the word "eudaemonistic," is never found. The word for "pleasure" occurs only in the catalogues of vices. On the other hand, the distinctive New Testament word for love, *agape,* is nowhere else found with such centrality. And early Christianity lifted the element of "hope" to a pinnacle that was unique.

The religious character of the ethic is seen in the fact that it is consistently viewed as a *response to God's initiative* in the gospel. If few of the detailed maxims were novel, they were set in the new framework of the Christian's experience of redemption. Paul began the ethical section of Romans with the words, "I beseech you by the mercies of God . . . . be transformed by the renewal of your mind." One of his most distinctive notes was that the ethical life is the fruit of the Spirit of God. In other words, union with Christ who is the Spirit should produce the new moral life within the believer. John says frankly, "We love because he first loved us." Both James and First Peter prefaced their moral exhortations with a statement of the new birth by means of the word of God. These new ideals flow directly from the experience of being born to a higher life. It is this element of a response to the work of God which is the most original aspect of New Testament ethics. Fellowship with God was not the reward for right living; ethical living must flow from what God had done for men in Christ.

2. Rejection of the World

Most ethical duties are social in character. Yet the emphasis in the New Testament lies on the individual aspects of conduct. The reason is not far to seek. Since they were citizens of the kingdom of God, the early Christians took a fundamentally *otherworldly* attitude toward the life about them. Of course they sought to be faithful and just in the midst of all of their social relationships. But there was no thought of changing human institutions. There was no time for that. They simply sought to instill a new spirit and a new fidelity into the orders of society as they were found.

This should be clearly recognized so that modern Christians will appreciate in advance the reason for the limitations which will be discovered. It is one thing to waste no time on trying to change social institutions when you are sure that this world is soon to pass away. It is another thing to neglect this obligation when one looks forward to an indefinite future. The New Testament ethic belonged to a community which had separated itself from the world. The position of the modern church is inevitably different.

The first step was to *"put away"* the sins of the world. In most of the epistles this phrase is found. Foremost among the sins to be put away stood the *sexual sins,* so characteristic of the heathen world. Fornication, uncleanness, lust, and licentiousness should no longer belong to their lives. Next there is often mention of *covetousness,* described as idolatry. Then follow the sins of *strife;* anger, dissension, and enmity are to have no place in their lives. Finally they must put away *sins of speech* such as falsehood and railing. James developed this to the greatest length, for he looked upon the tongue as the member most difficult to tame.

Over and over again long catalogues of these vices are recited. Mark inserted one in expanding a teaching of Jesus. They often recur in the letters. One may question how effective it was simply to name over a series of vices. But the aim of the teachers was clear: to stress separation from the sins of the gentile society. Whether the Code of Holiness in Leviticus 18–19 lay in the background of their thinking we cannot know. But their attention must have been called to these chapters because here stood the commandment which Jesus had selected as second only to absolute love of God, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (19:18).

3. The Christian Virtues

Opposed to the vice catalogues stood the lists of virtues. In Paul stress was laid upon such notes as compassion, lowliness, kindness, patience, and forgiveness. Peace and joy and self-control were to be dominating notes of the Christian life. In the Pastorals, righteousness and faith are included as individual virtues. Beside them are a group of new words drawn from the Hellenistic environment, such as "serious," "sensible," and "godliness." None of these English equivalents quite convey the extent to which the original exuberant note had descended to the more ordinary bourgeois level. But central in all lists and all parts of the New Testament is "love," the sum of the law and the bond of perfection.

Though Paul's most eloquent description of love stands in I Corinthians 13, Romans 12–13 show better how it was developed in his usual ethical catechism. Sincere and affectionate love was to be shown to all of the brethren. This would express itself through humility, patience, generosity, and hospitality. Toward those outside the community, love must mean nonretaliation. The Christian will bless those who persecute him, seek peace with all men, and leave vengeance to God. He will endeavor to overcome evil with good. Here stands the purest ethic of the gospel. The ideal of love has not yet become restricted to the love of the brethren. It is striking that in First Peter, which was written during persecution, Christian love is also interpreted in terms of "not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling; but contrariwise blessing."

The letter to the Hebrews began its ethical exhortations with the call to love. This author particularly stressed hospitality and concern for the prisoners. He too wrote during persecution, when some of the brethren were in the clutches of the police. With many missionaries traveling from place to place hospitality had to be found. First Peter also commends this virtue. The author of Hebrews followed with the demand for the rejection of sexual impurity and the love of money. Over and over again in early Christian literature these two warnings are placed together. He closed his ethical section on the note that the life of thanksgiving, good deeds, and generous charity is the sacrifice with which God is pleased. Paul had begun his ethical catechism on that note. Their bodies were to be a living, spiritual sacrifice.

James also stressed the need for brotherly love. That was the royal law. No faith could save a man who failed to clothe the naked and feed the hungry. In the Johannine writings, love was the new commandment. This love must not be in word only, but also in deed. If a brother is in need and our compassion is not open to him, the love of God certainly does not abide in us. In the Gospel of John, to love one another is the sole commandment. Here the example which Jesus set is particularly stressed. "As I have loved you." Thus we see how universally love is made the climax and center of Christian living. God's love for men demanded not only separation from the sins of the world; it called for devoted love to our fellow men, and especially to the brethren.

4. The Ethical Struggle

The ethical life called for constant struggle. It was a struggle, first of all, against the *human pride* which failed to bow in humility before God. Hence we find the frequent injunction, "Submit yourselves to God." Since the Christian life was lived in the religious community, it frequently meant obedience to the leadership of the church. "Self-realization" on an individualistic level was not the ideal of early Christianity. They preached rather the humble bowing under the will of God. This meant struggle against the sin of pride.

The moral life also involved *struggle against the evil* in the world outside. Resist the devil, urged James, and he will flee from you. Your adversary walks about like a roaring lion, First Peter states. The author of Ephesians wrote, "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness." The evil in the world was more than the sum of individual wills. This writer developed to the fullest the idea of a Christian's armor for that warfare. The Christian was not to use the weapons of the adversary. Drawing on the imagery of the full equipment of a Roman soldier, he stressed the fact that truth and righteousness and faith were the protection of the Christian. In his hand was the sword of the Spirit, which was the word of God. With these weapons he should take his stand and ever be vigilant and alert in prayer and watchfulness.

5. Tables of Duties

To stand fast meant to be faithful in the various relationships of society. Beginning with Paul in Colossians, this is developed through the device of tables of duties. It has been plausibly conjectured that the kernel is to be found in a series of exhortations to wives, children, and slaves: those who stood outside the full obligations of the Jewish law. To these exhortations Paul added complementary duties for husbands, fathers, and masters. There was nothing democratic about the ideal which he proclaimed. Wives were to be subject; children were to obey; slaves were to serve wholeheartedly, as to the Lord. But within these relationships a considerate and humane spirit was to be brought. Husbands must love their wives; fathers must not provoke their children; masters must be just and fair to their slaves, remembering that they have a master in heaven. These relationships were not changed in accordance with the brotherhood in Christ. They were to be accepted as they were, but into them a finer spirit was to be infused.

This table of duties was expanded in Ephesians. The first addition was the comparison of the relation between husband and wife to that of Christ and the church. The emphasis was not on the ecstacy of union, but the relation of obedience. There follows a word on this "mystery" of marriage, which led the Roman Catholic Church to declare marriage a "sacrament." The other chief addition was the quotation from the Ten Commandments for children to honor their parents, and the injunction to fathers to "nurture them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord." This is the nearest that any New Testament book comes to specific treatment of the religious education of children.

First Peter is the next document to contain a "table of duties." This began with the obligation of obedience to the state and its representatives. There follows a long injunction to slaves to accept ill-treatment with patience. In so doing, they were imitating the example of Christ, who had never stooped to retaliation even though it meant death upon the cross. The institution of slavery was not attacked, but the individual slave might rise to the dignity of Christ himself. Wives were enjoined to be modest and obedient; their decoration should be of inward character, not outward jewels. First Peter shows that there were many wives of heathen husbands in the church, and they must take care not to embitter their husbands by too zealous missionary work. No injunctions to masters are included in this list, but husbands are urged to be considerate.

Also in the Pastorals, truncated lists of duties are to be found. In Titus, men and women are given separate exhortations appropriate to their age and responsibilities. Here, and likewise in First Timothy, the reciprocal obligations of slaves and masters are stressed. But it is clear on reading these how little that is specifically Christian is to be found. A spirit of love motivated all of the advices, but it never became radical enough to attack the inequalities and inherited injustices which inevitably thwarted the fullest realization of love. The compromises with the world as it was were larger than the best of the early Christians could realize.

6. The Economic Problem

What we miss in all of these lists is a fuller treatment of the economic problem. It is clear that Paul had no such awareness as Jesus of the peril of riches. He did insist on industry and work. Likewise, in the epistle to the Ephesians we read, "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands." But in the minds of the hand workers and the small shopkeepers, who together with slaves comprised the first Christian believers, the concept of a "Christian economic order" hardly arose. By the close of the first century, however, more people of means were found in the Christian communities, and hence there was more reason to deal with the problem of wealth.

Paul had expressed the ideal of contentment in his letter to the Philippians. He thanked them for their concern for him, but added that he had learned in whatever state he found himself, whether abundance or want, therein to be content. An even more Stoic note is struck in First Timothy. We brought nothing into the world and can take nothing out of it. If we have food and clothing, that should be quite enough. Piety is not to be looked upon as a means of material gain, but should be joined with contentment.

First Timothy and James contain almost all of the teaching in the canonical books of this period which bears on wealth. But to them we should add the evangelist Luke. He clearly gave an excessive stress on almsgiving in his report of the teaching of Jesus. It is no accident that he was the evangelist who reported the most words of Jesus exalting the poor and stressing the peril of wealth. When he interpreted the full sharing in material goods at Jerusalem as if it implied a communistic society he was probably betraying his own sympathies. But in none of these writings is there anything approaching what a modern American would call "the social gospel." It is simply the application of the other-worldly point of view to the economic sphere of life.

It was felt that the desire to be rich led to senseless preoccupation with the things of the world. The arrogant merchant, making plans for the future of his business, overlooked the transiency of life and the uncertainty of riches. Everything is dependent on the will of the Lord. He is no respecter of persons. But already there was danger of social discriminations in the community worship. The man with gold rings and fine clothing was shown to a good seat, while the poor man in shabby clothing was compelled to stand in the rear or sit on the floor. That was a reversal of the will of God, for he had decreed that the poor were the heirs of the kingdom. The rich are like the grass which withers away under the summer sun.

In their zeal for wealth, men were led to injustice. It was the rich according to James who oppressed the poor and dragged them into court. They held back the wages of the laborers. They lived on the earth in luxury and pleasure. As the author of First Timothy wrote, "The love of money is the root of all evils" (a proverb quoted also by Bishop Polycarp a little later). But their punishment was at hand. Their gold and silver and costly garments were not the real riches. The rich were simply treasuring up condemnation to come. But with all his attack on wealth, James had no social program. His only instruction was, "Be patient until the coming of the Lord." As the farmer waits for the rain, so the believer waits for the divine vindication.

Luke and the author of the Pastorals at least stressed the duty of almsgiving. "The rich are to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous, and so lay up for themselves a good foundation for the future." We can hardly imagine a sentence farther removed from the real Paul. What would he have thought of building up a storehouse of merit by the generous distribution of goods! But an admonition like this does not touch the ethic of the acquisition of wealth. As yet, Christian teaching did not deal specifically with that problem, much less with the ethical control of the economic institutions of society. But at least some sections of the church had not yet forgotten the warning of Jesus that riches presented the supreme spiritual peril.

BIBLE READINGS

1. Sources of Ethical Teaching: Phil. 4:8; Rom. 12:1-2; Gal. 5:22-23; I John 4:19; I Pet. 1:23–2:1.
2. Rejection of the World: Eph. 4:25-32; 5:3-4; I Pet. 2:1-2; 4:3; Col. 3:5-10; Jas. 1:21; 3:1-12; Mark 7:21-22.
3. The Christian Virtues: John 13:33-34; Rom. 12:9-21; I Pet. 3:8-9; Heb. 13:1-5, 15-17; Jas. 2:15-16; I John 3:17-18; I Tim. 6:11.
4. The Ethical Struggle: Eph. 6:10-18; Jas. 4:7; I Pet. 5:6-9.
5. Tables of Duties: Col. 3:18–4:1; Eph. 5:22–6:9; I Pet. 2:13–3:7; I Tim. 6:1-2; Titus 2:1-10.
6. The Economic Problem: Phil. 4:10-13; I Tim. 6:6-10, 17-19; Jas. 1:9-11; 2:1-7; 4:13-17; 5:1-11.

CHAPTER XXV

THE RELATION TO THE STATE AND SOCIETY

THE early Christians owed their first allegiance not to the realm of Caesar but to the kingdom of God. They lived as sojourners in the midst of an evil world. They were despised exiles, not from the land of Palestine but from the kingdom of God. Though they were "in the world" it was their constant aim not to be "of the world." This world would pass away, but he who did the will of God would abide forever. To become entangled in the affairs of the world would mean to forsake complete devotion to their heavenly Lord.

At no point did this other-worldly attitude present more difficult problems than in relation to the state. Considering the growing importance of the "church and state" problem in the modern world, we are justified in giving a somewhat fuller treatment to this issue than to most of the others. How did the early Christians work out the adjustment of their obligations to secular authority? Since the background for their decisions lay in the attitude which Jesus himself had taken, we must return first of all to an outline of that position.

1. JESUS AND THE APOSTOLIC AGE

Jesus came into contact with three governments: the rule of Herod Antipas in Galilee, the Jewish councils culminating in the Sanhedrin, and the Roman power headed by the procurator. There is no record that he directly repudiated any of these. Jesus was not an anarchist. In contrast to the Zealots, he rejected the road of revolution against Rome and instead counseled nonresistance. His blessing was for the peacemakers. He refused to repudiate the obligation to pay taxes, but at the same time he affirmed the sole authority of God to receive man's love. Pursuant to his own absolute devotion to the will of God he ran afoul of the power of the state. The state appears, therefore, as the agency which decreed the death of him whom Christians looked upon as the supreme revelation of God.

The earliest opposition to the Christian church came from Jewish authorities rather than from the secular state. At first Christians did not appear separate from Jews in the eyes of the Roman officials; and Judaism was tolerated by Rome as a national religion. As long as Christianity was not recognized as distinct, it shared in this toleration. But this did not save Christians from attacks at the hand of mobs, for there was much anti-Semitic feeling in the ancient world. From the Acts of the Apostles it is clear that Jews sometimes stirred up antipathy against the Christian missionaries. Occasionally the opposition was on economic grounds, as at Philippi and Ephesus. When heathen diviners and makers of shrine images thought their profits were threatened, they stirred up hostility. Against the background of such experiences Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that it was through suffering that they must enter the kingdom of God .

Only once in the letters of Paul is the relationship to the state specifically discussed. It is instructive that the section is found in his letter to the capital city of Rome. In enjoining full obedience to the state, Paul adopted a position akin to the Stoic idea of a law of nature. While the state may not correspond to the absolute perfection of God, it has been ordained by God for the present sinful order. All political authorities exist by divine permission. They are to restrain evil men, not to harm the good. Hence, they deserve honor, respect, and the payment of the tribute that is due. To revolt against established authority is to revolt against God himself. Even evil governments may carry out the purposes of God for the present order. A similar point of view is found in John 19:11. Pilate would have no authority except as it was given him from above.

This attitude belonged with the social conservatism of Paul. In judging it we must never forget that Paul himself was a Roman citizen who enjoyed certain protections at the hand of the Roman power. But we must also remember that the apostle expected a great divine revolution which would shortly overturn the institutions of society. When Christ returned in glory all human institutions would be subjected to him. Though the kingdoms of this world would ultimately perish, they represented the permitted will of God for the present age.

2. The Attitude of the State

The trial of Paul not only led to his death. It must also have revealed to the Roman government the difference between Christianity and Judaism. The first persecution of the Christians broke out under Nero. We have seen that Peter went to his death at this time. The fullest account of the persecution is given by the Roman historian, Tacitus. He ascribed it to the charge which Nero leveled against Christians, that they were responsible for the great fire which destroyed much of the city. Since this accusation is supported by no other ancient account, it is much more probable that the persecution took place under the police power of the state, which was invoked out of envy (so I Clement 5). In any case, the active persecution was short-lived and confined to the city of Rome itself. But while it lasted, the community was subjected to barbarous suppression.

During the next half century, the development of Roman policy toward Christianity is obscure. On principle, Rome was tolerant toward all religions unless they were believed to promote immorality. But patriotism required participation in religious rites which were considered essential for the welfare of the state. This could create no difficulty on a polytheistic basis where a man was free to worship as many gods as he chose. A monotheist, however, could not conscientiously join in these political-religious ceremonies. As soon as officials recognized that Christians did not come under the release granted to Jews, they were in danger of political suppression. But since most Christians were quite obscure people, their actions would go unnoticed unless some social disturbance aroused attention. There is no clear evidence of any special law against them at this time. Rather, they might be suppressed at any time under the police power of the state. Christians formed a society which was *illicita* in the eyes of the state. Christians were believed to be guilty of various crimes. Hence, if a person admitted the name, he was suspected of being a criminal who deserved punishment.

First under Trajan is the policy of the Roman government clear. About A.D. 112 the younger Pliny was serving as governor of the province of Bithynia. He wrote to the emperor requesting direction on the correct procedure in the prosecution of Christians. This "superstition" had spread throughout the province so that before he took hold of the situation the temples were partially deserted. He had committed to death those who confessed their faith; those who expressed a willingness to sacrifice had been allowed to recant. Some accusations had come to him anonymously; others had come from "informers." Pliny now wanted to know whether different treatment should be meted out according to age; whether pardon should be granted for repentance; and whether "the name" was sufficient, or whether they should be punished because of crimes attributed to "the name." In his reply, Trajan approved the policy which his governor had followed. He insisted that Christians were not to be sought out, nor were anonymous accusations to be admitted. But if the charge was proved, punishment must follow, though pardon might be secured by a willingness to offer the appropriate sacrifices.

It is clear from this correspondence that prosecution for "the name" was sufficient. This does not seem to have been a new policy first inaugurated at this time. Yet the suffering undergone by Christians depended on the local situation. It was under Trajan that Bishop Ignatius of Antioch was taken to Rome to suffer martyrdom. But on the way he had free intercourse with the Christians of Asia Minor, and it does not appear that he thought he was endangering their lives by his association with them. While some Christians were called upon to suffer, most were able to go on their way undisturbed, though doubtless their lives were in constant jeopardy.

3. Christians Facing Persecution

Numerous parts of the New Testament reflect situations of persecution. If Mark was written at Rome shortly after the Neronian persecution we might expect some influence from that fiery trial. This gospel of the martyrdom of Jesus may have been written for a martyr church. At that time there was peculiar pertinence to the words of the tradition, "Whoever would save his life shall lose it; whoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it." The persecutions which were to be a sign of the end had already come. But he who endured to the end would be saved.

The letter to the Hebrews was also written under the stress of possible martyrdom. The readers were in danger of falling away from their faith. At an earlier time, they had been imprisoned, had suffered the confiscation of their property, and had been made a gazing stock. Now a new persecution was upon them, though as yet it had not reached the stage of the shedding of blood. But the readers were to look upon this suffering as a discipline which evidenced their real sonship. They should not shrink back but be among those of faith. It is clear that the first of these persecutions did not equal in fury what we know of the Neronian persecution at Rome. The book is evidence for the kind of suffering which many Christians had to undergo.

First Peter also came from a period of persecution. Its author shared the conviction of Paul that Christian duty demanded strict obedience to the emperor. The ordinances of God included civil obedience to the authorities. Only evildoers need fear them. This attitude is all the more striking since persecution was taking place. Some have interpreted this as if it were only a social opposition from their heathen neighbors who reviled their good manner of life in Christ. That would be the only possible interpretation if the letter actually came from the apostle Peter. During his lifetime there certainly was no official prosecution throughout all of the provinces of Asia Minor. But this interpretation does not fit the facts described in I Peter 4:12-19. There, suffering for the name is listed alongside of suffering as a murderer or a thief. Men are not persecuted for these crimes by unkindly neighbors; they are prosecuted by the police. It seems to me that the only question relative to First Peter is how early the situation it presupposes actually came into existence. Does it represent the state of affairs under Domitian, or was it first true under Trajan?

Later Christian tradition names Domitian as the second emperor to attack the church. It must be admitted that the contemporary sources of information leave much to be desired in the way of full proof of this claim. We know that Domitian killed some high officials on the charge of atheism. The wife of one of these, Flavia Domitilla, is definitely connected with Christianity through archaeological discoveries. It is certain that Domitian stimulated a revival of the national worship and made a more stringent exaction of the poll tax from Jews. But did this involve an energetic persecution of the Christians? It must be candidly admitted that our strongest support for the tradition lies in these New Testament books which appear on other grounds to be no later than the reign of Domitian. To these should be added the letter from the church of Rome to Corinth known as First Clement. The author explained the delay in writing as due to the "unexpected calamities and disasters which have befallen us." This probably refers to the persecutions near the close of Domitian's reign.

4. The Radical Attitude of Revelation

The strongest evidence, however, lies in the book of Revelation. Irenaeus, writing in 180, referred it to the reign of Domitian, and this date is confirmed in the book itself. Revelation comes from a time of persecution, though we must distinguish clearly between the persecutions which had already taken place and the complete wiping out of the Christian church which the author anticipated. Members of the church at Smyrna were to be thrown into prison and must be faithful unto death. Antipas had been killed at Pergamum. Underneath the heavenly altar were the souls of the martyrs awaiting the divine vengeance upon their murderers. The book presupposes a time of testing and trial, but there is no indication that the persecution had as yet gone very far.

But the prophet John looked forward to a terrible intensification of the struggle between the powers of darkness and the people of God. The dragon would be represented on earth by the beast which came up out of the sea. Sometimes this beast seems to symbolize the Roman Empire itself. Sometimes it seems to refer to a demonic figure (the returning Nero) who will wage war upon the saints. In addition to this beast the prophet sees a second beast coming up out of the land, the false prophet. He would compel all men to worship the first beast, in other words, to engage in the imperial worship. Only those who joined in that worship might have the mark of the beast; all who did not carry the mark of the beast would suffer economic boycott and be killed. Thus

John sees the harlot woman, which is the great city reigning over the kings of the earth, "drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." But beyond the vision of these martyrdoms on earth, John sees the triumph of the martyrs in heaven and in the future world. These who came out of the great tribulation will stand before the throne of God and serve him day and night and finally they will reign with Christ on earth for a thousand years.

Here we face a very different attitude toward the state than the conservative acceptance in Paul and First Peter. Here the power of Rome incorporates the demonic powers of evil as they are let loose on earth. We must never forget that John was employing ancient mythical concepts. These stood ultimately for cosmic forces of evil and not simply for certain historical powers of his time. He envisaged for the future a death struggle which would rise to terrible intensity. For the courageous believer, there could be no compromise with a government which demanded the worship of the spirit of Rome and of the living emperor. That was antichrist, the beastly empire of the book of Daniel. But Christian courage was to be undergirded by the certainty that God's deliverance was at hand. The kingdoms of this world would become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ.

5. Christian Apologetic

But this radical hostility was not yet the accepted position of all the church. Though Christians did not accept posts of responsibility under the secular government, they did everything within their power, consistent with loyalty to Christ, to avoid unnecessary clash. If they would not pray *to* the emperor, at least they early formed the habit of praying *for* the emperor. The earliest form we have is preserved in First Clement:

> Grant that we may be obedient to . . . . our rulers and governors upon the earth. . . . . Thou, Master, hast given the power of sovereignty to them. . . . . And to them, Lord, grant health, peace, concord, firmness that they may administer the government which thou hast given them without offense.

It is in the writings of Luke that the political apologetic of the early Christians went furthest. Matthew and John also joined in heaping all of the blame for the crucifixion of Jesus on the Jews. Matthew presented Pilate as washing his hands before the multitude in expression of his belief in the innocence of Jesus while the people shouted, "His blood be on us and on our children." John makes the chief priests say, "We have no king but Caesar," as they refused to let Jesus be released and demanded his crucifixion. But throughout his two volumes Luke did not miss an opportunity to plead the political innocence of Christianity. It was not a religion which was dangerous to the state; whenever officials had a chance to understand the situation they always acted favorably toward it.

Not only did Pilate three times seek to release Jesus before permitting his crucifixion. He sent him to Herod, who found nothing worthy of death in Jesus. While Christians suffer at the hand of Jews throughout the book of Acts, no Roman official is ever represented as pronouncing a hostile judgment. Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of Cyprus, had been favorably impressed by Paul. Gallio at Corinth dismissed the charges of the Jews with contempt. Though Paul was beaten and imprisoned at Philippi, the officials came the next day to apologize for their mistake. Though it is almost certain that Paul suffered an imprisonment in Ephesus, Luke did not mention the fact. Many of the indignities which he himself catalogued in II Corinthians 11 must have been at the hands of political officials, but Luke is silent about them. After Paul was rescued from the Jewish mob by Roman soldiers, he was given a hearing before the Roman governors, Felix and Festus, and then before King Agrippa. Not one of them pronounced any condemnation upon Paul, and it is suggested that he might have been released if he had not appealed to Rome.

This note of political apologetic throughout the book of Acts is certainly not accidental. It is probable that Luke wrote during the reign of Domitian when the political situation of Christians was becoming more precarious. One of his objectives, as he addressed these volumes to "Theophilus," was to show that Christians were innocent of any subversive action against the state. It was the jealousy of the Jews which had always been to blame. Though Christians preached of the kingdom of God, that did not mean revolt against Rome.

The hopes of Luke to avoid a clash with the empire were doomed to be futile. Yet it was a century and a half after John wrote before any Roman emperor inaugurated a serious general persecution. The lurid anticipations of the prophet John were not realized even during the darkest days of persecution. But the official approval of Christianity by Constantine did not mean the victory of the kingdom of God. The growth of the spirit of compromise with the world belongs outside the New Testament period which we are surveying. But Paul and the book of Revelation epitomize the tension involved in a Christian's attitude toward the state. On the one hand, some government is essential for the restraint of sinful men. Hence the author of the Pastorals could exhort to be in subjection to rulers and authorities. On the other hand, all human governments tend to claim an authority which the Christian can give only to the kingdom of God. As long as Christians expected the miraculous intervention of God, they might live in spiritual separation from the political institutions of the world. But when the continuance of this world had to be accepted, some compromise had to be found. To this day, the difficult puzzle remains of finding a defensible relationship between the "things that are Caesar's" and the "things that are God's."

BIBLE AND SOURCE READINGS

1. JESUS AND THE APOSTOLIC AGE: Mark 12:13-17; Matt. 5:9; Rom. 13: 1-7.
2. THE ATTITUDE OF THE STATE: I Clem. 5–6; Tacitus, *Annals* xv. 44; Letters of Pliny the Younger 96, 97.
3. CHRISTIANS FACING PERSECUTION: Mark 8:34-36; 13:11-13; Heb. 10: 32-34; 12:3-7; I Pet. 2:13-17; 3:13-17; 4:12-19; I Clem. 1.
4. THE RADICAL ATTITUDE OF REVELATION: Rev. 2:8-13; 6:9-11; 7:13-15; 13:1-18; 17:6, 18; 20:4-6.
5. CHRISTIAN APOLOGETIC: I Tim. 2:2; I Clem. 60–61; Luke 23:6-23; Acts 25:23-27; 26:30-32; Matt. 27:24-25; John 19:12-15.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

The earliest Christian hope was of a coming kingdom of God. God's salvation was to come to men on a new and glorified earth. It was not a hope in which isolated individuals were to be carried away to heaven. It was a social hope which involved the resurrection of the dead to participate in God's new order. They did not believe that the soul was inherently immortal. Their faith was in a God who raises the dead.

1. The Earliest Expectation

We have seen the intensity with which this hope was held by Jesus. The consummation of the reign of God was expected by him in the near future. The apostolic age was controlled by that expectation. The Lord would come to inaugurate the new age with power while some of them were still alive. The persistence of that belief is witnessed in John 21 where the expectation is mirrored that the "beloved disciple" would remain to the end. It is superfluous to catalogue all of the evidence. In one of Paul's latest letters he wrote, "The Lord is at hand." Toward the end of the century John wrote as the "revelation" of the Lord that he was coming soon. In the first letter of John we read, "Little children, this is the last hour."

It cannot be said too often that for the early Christians this hope did not mean the *end* of the world. It meant the *beginning* of the true world, the kingdom of God. It meant the coming of the universal sovereignty of God. That was more than a new social order. It involved the judgment and the resurrection. It was nothing less than the coming of God's salvation. But, as we shall see, the Christians were on the whole very reticent in the painting of their pictures of the new age and the punishments of those who were excluded.

The hope of Jesus was not depicted in terms of elaborate apocalyptic imagery. He believed that the crisis would arrive suddenly and unexpectedly, like the coming of a thief. There would be no more warning than in the days of Noah and of Lot. The details of the resurrection and the kingdom of God retreat behind the stern demand for repentance. The gate was narrow and the road hard-pressed and few would be able to find it.

Paul gave a much fuller description of the expected events. The eschatological drama had already begun with the resurrection of Christ. That was why a denial of the resurrection was a repudiation of God's salvation. Men were now living on the narrow isthmus between two worlds. They had but a brief time to preach the message before Christ would come in power. When he wrote First Corinthians Paul confidently expected to be among those who would be alive. These would be changed into their body of glory and the dead in Christ would be raised imperishable. Christ would reign until he had destroyed every rule and authority and power, and all things were brought under subjection to God. Then he would deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and God would be everything to everyone.

But the terrible calamity in Asia experienced shortly after writing this letter evidently convinced Paul that he might not remain to the end. In Second Corinthians he considered the possibility that he might die before the coming of Christ. Did Paul, under the stress of this calamity, come to adopt an essentially Greek belief in immortality? Many interpret the fifth chapter of that letter to mean that Paul now expected to depart and be at once with Christ on death. When his earthly tent was dissolved, he would receive temporary possession of his resurrection body and not be found "naked."

The passage must be studied in connection with the later expressions of Paul in Romans and Philippians. In Romans Paul simply wrote that in life or in death we belong to the Lord. He does not say when a man receives his resurrection body. But together with all creation he groans, waiting for the redemption of the body. In Philippians Paul frankly expressed his desire to depart and be with Christ. Facing martyrdom, he saw open to himself the prerogative of the martyrs, a preliminary participation in the redemption. In the book of Revelation, the martyrs are under the altar, though there they have not yet received their "white robes," the resurrection body. Personally, I do not see in the cumulative evidence any clear proof that Paul changed his eschatological conceptions. Under the assurance of the companionship of Christ he came to accept cheerfully the possibility of death before the parousia. In Second Corinthians he passed over the short interval between his death and that event, thinking only of his desire to be pleasing to his Lord.

2. The Problem of Delay

With the delay of the end, the influence of Jewish apocalyptic made itself felt more and more in the charting of the preliminary signs. The kingdom could not come at once, for certain events must transpire first. In Second Thessalonians we have the earliest apocalypse of this kind. "The man of lawlessness" must come and work his wicked deception. But now there is one who restrains. Finally the Lord Jesus will come and slay the lawless one with the breath of his mouth; those who do not know God will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord.

The Gospel of Mark assigns a much longer apocalypse to Jesus himself. After the saying about the coming destruction of the Temple, Jesus is asked when these things would take place. His reply deals with the signs which must precede the coming of the new age. This is almost certainly an early Christian "apocalypse." Some would relate it to the crisis when Gaius Caligula ordered his statue set up in the Temple. Others would see in it the "revelation" to the church at the outbreak of the Jewish War. In any case, it is a Christian adaptation of a familiar Jewish pattern.

First would come false Christs, leading many astray. There would be wars and rumors of wars. Earthquakes and famines would follow as the beginning of the cosmic woes. Then would come persecution for the church, and the preaching of the gospel to all the nations. There would follow the mysterious "abomination of desolation," for this prophecy in Daniel must find fulfillment. After a repetition of the false prophets, there are portrayed portents in the heavenly bodies. Then at last men would see the Son of man coming in clouds and he would send forth the angels to gather his elect from the uttermost part of the earth. Doubtless the text of our Mark contains later insertions, but this document shows how the delay was explained. All these things had to happen first, but still the parousia would take place before that generation had passed away.

Mark emphasized the necessity for delay, but we see in Matthew the endeavor to whip up eschatological enthusiasm. He wrote some decades later when the "evil servant" was growing lax because the Lord tarried. In all of the parables on faithfulness the delay is emphasized. The bridegroom tarries; the master of the slaves does not return until "after a long time." But Matthew insisted that Christ would come and bring fearful punishment to those who were guilty of "lawlessness." He is the only evangelist who lays stress upon Gehenna and its unquenchable fire. Six times he repeats the words, "There they will weep and gnash their teeth." Only once does the phrase appear in any other gospel. It has often been pointed out that the Greek word translated "eternal" does not mean literally "everlasting" but "for the duration of the aeon." It is doubtful, however, that we should make too much of this distinction. The New Testament writers were not thinking in terms of the heaven and hell of later Christian theology, but entrance to the kingdom of God. None of them ascribed universalism to Jesus.

The problem of the delay of the parousia continued to be acute well into the second century. When the modern Christian realizes how difficult it is for him to adjust his own thinking to the idea that the coming of Christ did not take place when it had been expected, he will appreciate how hard it was for those who lived at that time. Still the great body of the church did not give up the hope entirely. The author of the Pastorals will not listen to the idea of Gnostic teachers that the resurrection is already past.

It is in Second Peter that the problem is most clearly mirrored. This "letter" lies far outside the historical period covered by this survey, but since the pseudonymous document was finally accepted into the canon of scripture, we should note its major teaching. Mockers had arisen who said, "Where is the sign of his coming?" This second-century "Peter" assured his readers that since God had once destroyed the heaven and the earth by water, he would do it again with fire. He was thinking in terms of the Stoic idea of a world conflagration. But if the Lord seemed to tarry, it was only because God's timetable is not man's. The Psalmist said, "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years." Therefore "soon" is not according to human reckoning. They should look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness.

3. The Hope of a Martyr Church

The most detailed portrayal of the early Christian hope is to be found in the book of Revelation. We have already considered the political crisis which called forth this Christian adaptation of Jewish apocalyptic. We must approach it not as an infallible prediction of events which lie in our own future, but as a triumphant expression of early Christian faith. Despite the persecutions and difficulties they were experiencing, the kingdoms of this world would become the kingdom of God and of his Christ. Here in Revelation, academic polysyllables like "eschatology" truly burst into a Hallelujah Chorus. Three notes predominate in John's outlook on the future: the woes on the world, the preservation of the faithful, and the victory of God.

(1) Jewish apocalypses had made much of the *messianic woes.* John portrayed them in three series: the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls. The seventh in each of the first two groups merely introduces the next series. The account of the plagues in Egypt and pictorial symbols drawn from such books as Joel and Zechariah stimulated these visions of the author. The first and most interesting series is introduced by four horsemen. The sequence of woes is similar to that in Mark 13. Conquering war, civil strife, famine, pestilence, persecution, and cosmic disasters wreak their havoc on humanity. It is as if nature joined in punishing men for their sins. The modern man inevitably asks if the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ could deliberately send such disasters on man even in his worst sin. The problem emphasizes the difficulty of finding in God the direct cause of every thing that happens. Nevertheless, these hard facts are true to life. These woes *do* come. John was attempting to show that God would yet save. He is in his heaven though all is *not* right with the world.

(2) The *preservation of the faithful* is also presented under three symbols. The complete number of 144,000 is sealed in chap-

ter seven; the inner court of the Temple is measured for preservation in chapter 11; in chapter 12 the earth swallows up the river that would engulf the woman and her children. But this assurance of preservation did not mean salvation from all physical harm. It was protection from demonic influence. John seems to have anticipated a universal martyrdom for the church. The souls of the first martyrs were now under the heavenly altar. In other pictures we see the anticipation of thousands more. The multitudes wearing white robes which no man can number are those who have come out of *the* great tribulation.

John was writing to steel the courage and faithfulness of a persecuted church. They were not to be saved *from* death but to be saved *through* death. It is in relation to this that his conception of the millennium must be read. We have noted the Jewish idea of a temporary messianic reign. John adapted this to provide a special reward for the martyrs. Those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus would be raised first and enjoy a thousand-year reign with Christ before the final judgment and the new heaven and the new earth. Those who look for literal predictions of things still in our future often overlook this point. But John's words are perfectly clear. Only the martyrs are to be raised to reign with Christ during this period.

The modern reader is impelled to ask why anyone would release Satan after he had been securely bound for a thousand years. Also, it does not speak very well for the beneficent rule of Christ and the martyrs that the deceiver should beguile humanity so quickly after this long period of bliss. Would men grow tired of Utopia? It may serve as a reminder to us of the difficulty of even conceiving of a perfect society. The history that we know is always "becoming," and the perfect kingdom of God is in a sense always beyond history. At least history will always know social declines as well as advances.

(3) The final note is of *the victory of God*. In a sense it is a victory that is already won. Christ has already freed men from their sins and ransomed them by his blood. Satan has already been cast down out of heaven by Michael and his angels. If the conflict is so difficult on earth, it is because all of the dragon's fury is concentrated there. But God's victory on earth is also sure. True, John did not think in terms of the gradual winning of the world

through education and conversion. His point of view was far removed from the modern idea of progress. But if he held that conditions *must* get worse, it was because nothing else then appeared possible. There was no human power to resist that of Rome. Yet, though no reversal was visible on the horizon of history, God's victory was sure. His book should guard us against undue pessimism, but also against premature optimism. It should be a constant reminder of the demonic possibilities within human nature and even the most advanced civilizations.

John utilized many pictures of the coming judgment. That fact may suggest that no one of them was to be taken literally. There is a winepress, a sickle, an earthquake, fire, and battle. The winepress and sickle come from the realm of the harvest. Whatever a man sows that shall he also reap. When a crop of evil is sown, it must be harvested. The picture of a battle inclines much further toward arbitrary vengeance. This was a traditional symbol throughout the Old Testament. And yet, there is no real battle. The swords of men are powerless face to face with the moral order of the universe. They that take the sword will perish by the sword.

The victory of God means a new heaven and a new earth. The goal of history is man's salvation, but that salvation never stands completely within history. Here again we are presented with symbols, but they are social symbols rather than individual. First, there is the *banquet* of God; it stands in strange contrast to the feast of the carrion birds on the flesh of the kings and the captains and mighty ones. At that time men will sup with Christ. Again, it is a *city,* but one very different from Babylon or any earthly habitation. A cube which is 1,500 miles in each direction defies all our imagination; but that may be the author's deliberate intention. "It has not entered into the mind of man what God has prepared for those who love him." Like the mystic, John could best speak in negatives. Neither sorrow nor tears would be found there, for God would wipe away every tear from their eyes. There would be no sea, for that was a horror that divided men. There would be no night there, for darkness did not belong with God. There would be no temple in that city, for the Lamb would be its light. God would be present in all of life and not in a tabernacle set apart for him.

4. THE JOHANNINE REINTERPRETATION

But not all early Christians continued to think in these terms, which since the days of Daniel had accompanied the thought of the resurrection. The man who departed farthest from the early expressions of Christian hope was the author of the Fourth Gospel. Ironically, later church tradition ascribed this gospel to the same man who wrote Revelation. It is true that there are some references in the book to a resurrection at the last day (if these are not to be ascribed to a later ecclesiastical redactor) . But the author had come to a far-reaching transformation of the entire range of Christian hope.

Basic to the thinking of the evangelist was his new idea of *eternal life*. No longer is it the life of the age to come. It is the new supernatural gift which is available through the one whom God had sent. This life is a present possession through belief in Christ. The evangelist developed this through the "sign" of the raising of Lazarus and the accompanying conversation with Martha which sets forth the truth that Christ would bring. The importance of this event did not lie in the short extension of life which came to this brother of his beloved friends. The truth for all men lay in the fact that eternal life was the present gift of Christ.

When Martha met Jesus, the Master said, "Your brother will rise again." The usual device in the Fourth Gospel is to introduce misunderstanding of the words of Jesus so that there will be occasion for fuller amplification. Martha answered in terms of the Jewish and early Christian expectations, "Yes, I know that he will rise at the last day." But Jesus meant something very different. "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he were dead [like Lazarus] yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in me [like Martha] shall never die" [in other than a purely physical sense]. In other words, Christ raises the dead because eternal life is his present gift. "He who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life; he does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life."

This meant a new conception of the *parousia*, of the judgment, and of life after death. The coming of Christ is no longer pictured in terms of a spectacular event on the clouds of heaven, bringing the age to a close. Judas (not Iscariot) is the interlocutor to help bring out this conception of the Johannine Christ. He asks, "How is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus answers him, "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." In other words, the coming of Christ is to the hearts of those who love him. It is not a hope for some future time, but a present reality to faith.

Judgment is no longer a great assize at the end of history when the books are opened and the accounts balanced by a great divine bookkeeper. Judgment takes place now according to the way in which men face the crisis presented by Jesus. "And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." He who believes in the Son is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already. Here we see a judgment which is an automatic process of separation. This judgment does not come at some future time but today is the crisis which brings the judgment.

This reinterpretation goes further toward a doctrine of *immortality* than any other book in the New Testament. The Johannine Christ began his great word on life after death with the solemn injunction, "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God." As with the Jesus of history in his discussion with the Sadducees, belief in a life to come is grounded in faith in a God for whom individuals are of value. But in John the thought is no longer of resurrection on a reconstituted earth in the kingdom of God. "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." Some interpreters have thought that John meant that Christ would come for his own at the last day when the dead are raised. But against the background of the rest of the gospel, this is unlikely. The expectation rather was that Christ would come at the death of the believer to take him home to the rooms prepared. Yet, it should be noted that this Johannine doctrine is entirely different from all secular ideas of "immortality." John knows nothing of an inherent immortality of the soul. Man is not born immortal. Eternal life comes through believing on the one whom God has sent.

This individualized hope in the Fourth Gospel has appealed strongly to the Christian church down the centuries and in our own time. Yet it did fail to conserve one vital aspect of the more primitive Christian hope. Men need a hope for the individual, but they also need a hope for society. Even though individuals are taken home to the rooms which God has prepared, what of the future of the world of history? Is there no redemption for society? Does history have no meaning except as a sphere in which an eternal choice is made for a life which is entirely beyond history?

Further truth may be seen in the earlier eschatology when it is no longer taken as a literal, immediate event, but as a mythical symbol of the meaning of history. The idea of the coming of Christ at the end of the age may indicate to us that history has its fulfillment in him. He is, after all, the one through whom the world will be judged. He is not simply one of the waves in an endless process, but the center and goal of history. Meaning does not exist only for individuals outside history, but the historical process itself will find redemption. Of course such expressions as these intrude quite modern ideas. They are offered here only for fear that the attraction of the conceptions in John lead the reader to forget that the coming of the kingdom of God on earth was the heart and center of the message of Jesus.

BIBLE READINGS

1. The Earliest Expectation: I Cor. 15:20-28; II Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 1:21.
2. The Problem of Delay: II Thess. 2:3-12; Mark 13:3-27; Matt. 24: 48; 25:5, 19; II Tim. 2: 18; II Pet. 3:3-13.
3. The Hope of a Martyr Church: Rev. 6:1-17; 5:9-10; 7:1-4, 9-17; 12:7-12; 19:11–21:4; 21:9–22:5.
4. The Johannine Reinterpretation: John 3:17-21; 5:19-29; 6:40; 11:21-26; 14:1-2, 21-24; 16:16-22.

EPILOGUE

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

THROUGHOUT the story of the beginning of Christianity, the reader has been aware of much that is irremovable from the ancient world. We have studied the religious experiences and spiritual quests of peoples of long ago. Does the record contain anything more? They themselves believed that it did. They were witnessing not to their own experiences but to the good news of God. They had a gospel to preach. That gospel was not the whole of their religion, but it was its heart. The permanent significance of this record depends upon the essential truth or falsity of that gospel.

The gospel is not a book; it is a message. It is not an exhortation; it is good news. It is not first of all an appeal to men to do something. It is a proclamation about what God has done and is doing. It is not a discussion of a human problem. It is a word of God. It is not a human quest. It is the joyous realization that God has sought men, and the climax of that search lay in Jesus Christ.

Some modern scholars have postulated Aramaic originals behind our Greek gospels. I believe that it is an improbable assumption. Nevertheless, a few Aramaic words were kept untranslated in our Greek Bible. Two of these epitomize the original gospel: one is *Abba,* "Father"; the other is *Maranatha,* "Our Lord, come." In the truth which these words express lie the essential elements of the Christian message. Since the ideas have already been set forth fully, this concluding summary may be very brief.

Abba does not stand for an entirely new name for God. It characterizes the distinctive thought of God which lies at the center of the gospel. It was expressed through the life of Jesus as he incarnated forgiving grace in his relation toward the outcasts of society. It was embodied in the teaching of Jesus as he defended his ministry by appeal to a God whose seeking, forgiving love knows no end. It was the heart of the apostolic message about Jesus; God proved his love toward us in that Christ died for the ungodly. The Father expressed his love by a dynamic act in history.

The background of this message of forgiving love was the highest expression of ethical demand and a stern word of judgment. The moral requirement of God was not lessened but increased. But to this was brought the assured promise of fresh opportunity for the humble and repentant heart. If, instead of trusting in his own righteousness, a man shows mercy to others as he realizes his own need for forgiveness, he is sure to find reconciliation with God.

Jesus also preached the coming kingdom of God. Since the early Christians looked to him as the coming king, their hope found expression in the prayer, *Maranatha,* "Our Lord, come." These yearning words expressed the incompletion of God's salvation. There were still God-opposing forces to be overcome; if they were to be vanquished it must be through the power of God. Every human victory over evil depends for success upon the spiritual structure of the universe, and the more than human resources which undergird our struggle. But the final victory over evil lies beyond God's judgment. This early Christian prayer expressed the conviction that it was through Christ that God would judge the world. In fact, God *is* judging the world through him.

The gospel, therefore, meant a promise of power as well as of grace. It brought victorious living as well as pardon and peace. It not only assured man a new relationship to God. It brought confidence in the ultimate victory of right, and hope for the individual and for society. It meant that the God of creation is the ultimate sovereign of human history.

But the whole gospel is never understood apart from the aspect of human response to the divine initiative. God's love for men in Christ laid them under infinite debt. Their grateful response should be in terms of the same love to their fellow men which God had revealed in Christ. *Conduct is Christian when in response to God's forgiving grace men seek to solve their human problems according to the principle of love, using the guidance of*

Jesus, the best ethical experience of the race, and the fullest possible contemporary knowledge of facts.

Early Christianity contained very much more than the gospel. A large Jewish heritage was included from the very beginning. That means that the ties with Judaism will always be close. Ethical monotheism and moral standards of conduct are shared by the two faiths. It is impossible for Christianity to dispense with the Old Testament, for the gospel was born from the womb of Judaism. The spiritual frame enclosing the gospel is inevitably Jewish.

We have also seen that during the first century various tributaries flowed into the developing Christian faith as it spread into the gentile world. Elements of mysticism and sacramentalism developed through this living contact. In the centuries which were to come, further tributaries were received. Greeks contributed the philosophical framework for both dogma and social ethics. Romans developed institutional organization and disciplinary procedure. Down through the centuries new peoples have made their contributions as they have accepted the gospel. At the Reformation, men thought they were recovering original Christianity. It was so in part, but only in part. In fact, Teutonic tributaries were brought into the Christian stream.

The result is that Christianity is a *complex* woven together in various patterns at different times and places. Through it all the unifying factor has been the gospel. That is a *simplex,* the heart and center of Christian faith. Often receptivity to new influences has presented a peril. In our own time, some devout men and women have been afraid to give hospitality to the new currents of life and thought. This fear has often been well grounded when with others modern interests have completely pushed the gospel out of the center of the picture. But it is unreasonable that earlier generations should bring their tributaries while modern culture is looked upon as completely hostile. The Christian will always be open to new truth; but he deserves his name not because of that receptivity; he is a Christian because of the truth which he has found. That is primarily the gospel.

Sometimes men have tried to reduce the gospel to one pole. For some it has been salvation by Christ, a personal experience for the individual; for others it has been the coming kingdom of

God, which has often been reinterpreted as a social Utopia. But neither by itself can be a whole gospel. It is the tension between these two poles which provides the creative impulse of our religion: *Abba,* "Father," possession and peace; *Maranatha,* yearning and incompletion. Now are we the sons of God; *Abba,* "Father." It does not yet appear what we shall be; *Maranatha,* "Our Lord, come"; thy kingdom come.

APPENDICES

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES

B.C.	PALESTINE
332	Alexander conquers Palestine
301	Palestine under the Ptolemies
198	Palestine taken by Antiochus III
167	Desecration of the Temple at Jerusalem by Antiochus IV
164	Rededication by Judas Maccabeus
142	Political independence achieved by Simon Maccabeus
135-104	John Hyrcanus. Temple on Mount Gerizim destroyed; Samaria, Idumea, and Perea added
104-103	Aristobulus I. Galilee conquered
103-76	Alexander Janneus. Strife between Pharisees and Sadducees
76-67	Alexandra
67-63	Aristobulus II
63-40	Palestine successively under the control of Pompey, Julius Caesar, Cassius, and Antony
40-4	Herod the Great, king of Judea. Jesus born 8-4 B.C.

Rome	Judea	Galilee	Iturea
27 B.C.-A.D. *14 Augustus*	4 B.C.-A.D. 6 Archelaus	4 B.C.-A.D. 39 Herod Antipas	4 B.C-A.D. 34 Philip
Roman procurators			
A.D.			
6 -9 Coponius	Jewish uprising		
9-12 Ambibulus	6-15 Annas high priest		
12-15 Annius Rufus			
14-37 Tiberius			
15-26 Valerius Gratus	18-36 Caiaphas high priest		
26-36 Pontius Pilate	28 Preaching of John		
	30 Crucifixion of Jesus		
	Expansion of the church		
	Between		
37 Marcellus	32-39 Conversion of Paul		
37-41 Gaius Caligula			
Orders statue set up in the Holy of Holies			
38-41 Herennius Capito			
41-54 Claudius	41-44 Herod Agrippa I rules Palestine. Imprisons Peter, Acts 12:1 ff.		

SECULAR HISTORY		NEW TESTAMENT EVENTS		NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS	
44-48	Cuspius Fadus	45-46 or 47-48	Evangelization of South Galatia (Acts 13-14)		
46	Famine in Palestine	46-47	Jerusalem Council (Acts 11:30; 15:2; Gal. 2:1)		
48	Alexander	48	Incident at Antioch (Gal. 2:11 ff.)		
48-52	Cumanus	49	Paul in Galatia and Macedonia (Acts 16-17)		
49	Expulsion of Jews from Rome under Claudius	50	Arrival at Corinth (Acts 18)	50	I Thessalonians
				50-51	II Thessalonians
51-52	Gallio proconsul of Achaia	52-55	Paul in Ephesus and Asia (Acts 19)	54-55	I Corinthians
52-58	Felix			54-55	Galatians
54-68	*Nero*			55	II Corinthians
		55-56	Paul in Macedonia and Greece (Acts 20:1-6) (Acts 21:17)	56	Romans
		56	Paul arrives in Jerusalem	59-61	Colossians
58-62	Festus	59	Paul reaches Rome (Acts 28:16)	59-61	Philemon
		61	End of Acts of the Apostles	59-61	Philippians
62-64	Albinus	61-64	Death of Paul		
64	Neronian persecution				
64-66	Florus	66	Outbreak of Jewish revolt Christians flee to Pella		

	Secular History		New Testament Events		New Testament Books
68-69	*Galba, Otho, Vitellius*	**70**	Fall of Jerusalem	65-75	Mark
69-79	*Vespasian*				
77	Colosseum begun				(Approximate order but exact dates uncertain)
79-81	*Titus*				
79	Pompeii destroyed			(?)	James
					Hebrews
81-96	*Domitian*				Luke-Acts
					Ephesians
					Matthew
					Revelation of John
				(?)	I Peter
					I Clement
96-98	*Nerva*				The Gospel of John
98-117	*Trajan*				The Letters of John
112	Pliny persecutes Christians				Jude
115	Ignatius martyred at Rome				I and II Timothy and Titus
					Letters of Ignatius
					Didache
				ca. 150	II Peter

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